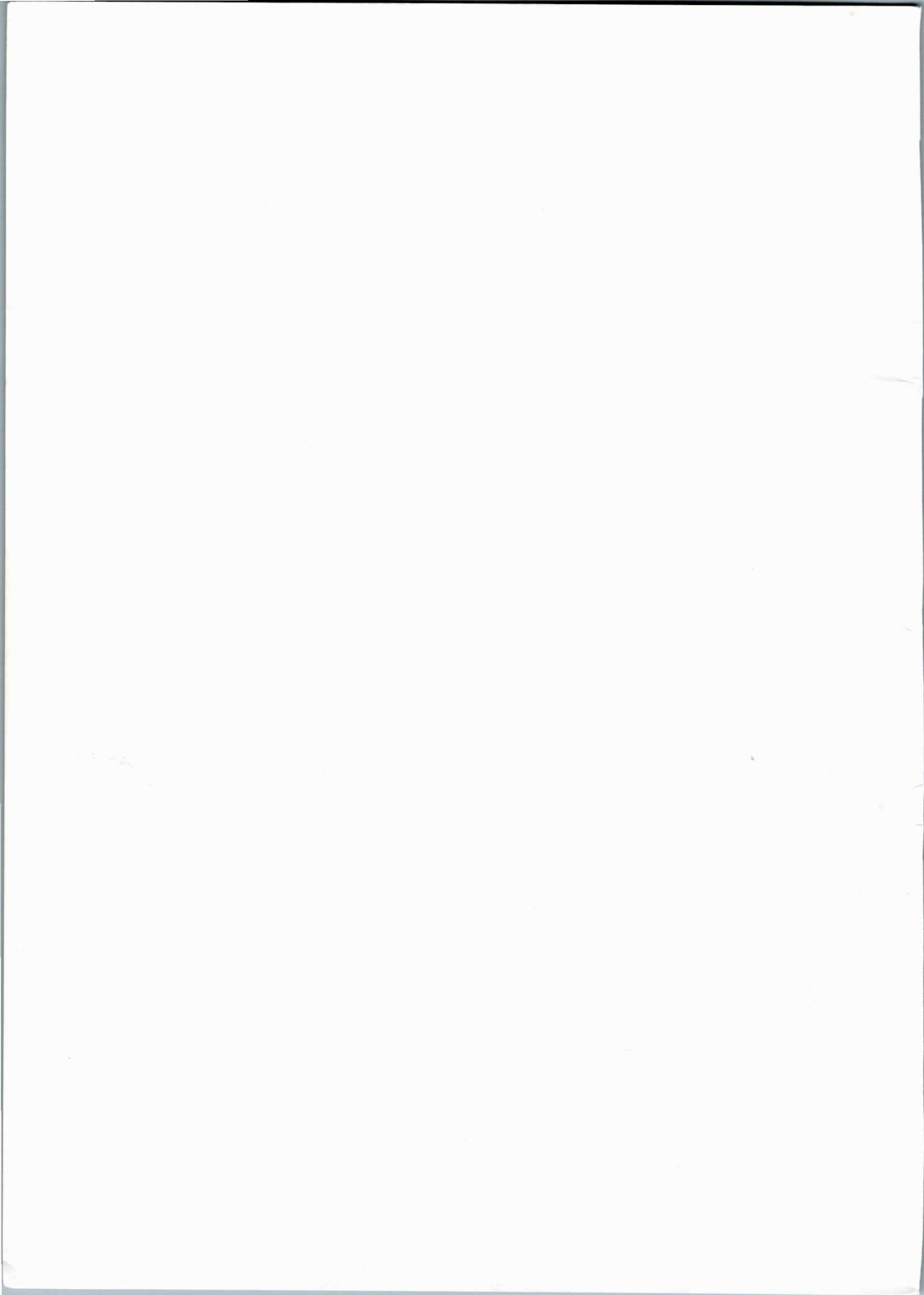


# The New Zealand Student Christian Movement, 1896-1996.

## A Centennial History



By Christine Berry

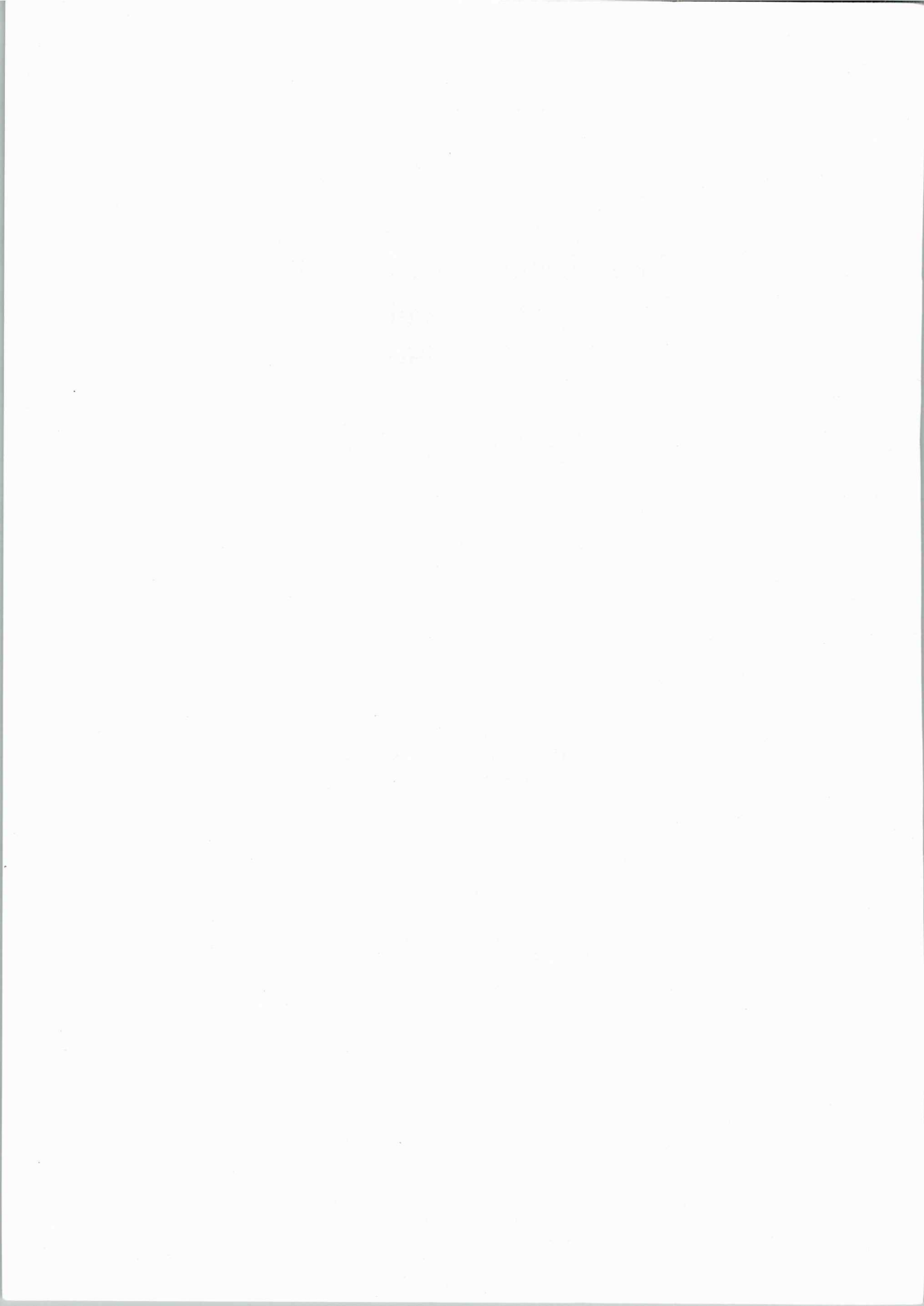


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## ABBREVIATIONS

AIM	Auckland Insitute and Museum Library, Auckland.
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
CCR	<i>Canterbury College Review.</i>
DNZB	<i>Dictionary of New Zealand Biography.</i>
EYM	Ecumenical Youth Movement.
HL	Hocken Library, Dunedin.
IVFEU	Inter Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions.
NCC	National Council of Churches.
NZJH	<i>New Zealand Journal of History.</i>
NZJT	<i>New Zealand Journal of Theology.</i>
OUR	<i>Otago University Review.</i>
OW	<i>Open Windows.</i>
PGA	<i>Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand</i>
PCANZ	Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.
RH	Ramsey House Chaplaincy, Victoria University of Wellington.
SCM	Student Christian Movement.
SJC	St. John's College, Auckland.
TSCF	Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship.
UAL	University of Auckland Library, Auckland.
VCR	<i>Victoria College Review.</i>
WCC	World Council of Churches.
WSCF	World Student Christian Federation.

## **'The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation' 1896-1918**

### **The Founding of the Australasian Student Christian Movement**

The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), founded in Sweden in 1895, was the vision of six men who wanted to see the gospel spread throughout the world. Many of the federation's leaders had connections with the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM), established in 1881 for the purpose of sending out missionaries. The WSCF's missions focus was reflected in the decision of 1906 to adopt the watchword of the SVM: 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation'. The purpose of the WSCF was to unite Christian groups in the universities and colleges under one banner for mutual support and encouragement, while still maintaining the individual characteristics and dynamics of each.<sup>1</sup>

John R. Mott, a vibrant young Methodist and formerly the North American general secretary of the YMCA, was granted the position of general secretary, which he occupied until 1920. Mott's first task was to spread the vision of the WSCF to the students of the world. While in India, he received a telegram requesting that Australasia be included in his international tour. While the young man was somewhat surprised to receive such a request, he agreed to extend his trip to include New Zealand and Australia.<sup>2</sup> Students waited with 'eager curiosity' for his imminent arrival.<sup>3</sup>

Mott's visit and subsequent tour around New Zealand created great enthusiasm. A 'wonderfully exciting' meeting inspired students at Canterbury University College to form their own branch of the SCM.<sup>4</sup> Otago and Lincoln Colleges were likewise inspired, while a small group at St. John's College in Auckland was set up (taken over by Auckland University College students soon after). The establishment of branches in tertiary institutions was of primary importance, although the creation of branches and the transformation of existing Christian groups in schools was encouraged by Mott's wife, Leila. In June 1896, Mott and several New Zealand representatives attended a meeting in Melbourne to unite the separate branches established during the tour. Out of this meeting the Australasian Student Christian Movement was born.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of the Australasian movement was essentially two fold: to equip and teach students, and to send out missionaries for the purpose of world evangelisation. In this respect it echoed the aims of the other national movements. However Mott had a specific agenda for the movement in Australasia. As well as

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<sup>1</sup>C.H. Hopkins, *John R. Mott 1865-1955: A Biography*, New York, 1979, p.130.

<sup>2</sup>Tissington Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, 1993, p.79.

<sup>3</sup>Iva E. Bertram, 'The Beginnings of the Christian Union', *News Sheet*, no.3, June 1926, p.9, Hocken Library, Manuscripts and Archives (HL), Dunedin.

<sup>4</sup>A.L. Grant, extract from a letter, 10 May 1896, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL, Wellington.

<sup>5</sup>The movement was originally called the Australasian Student Christian Union (ASCU). In 1913 the group changed its name to the Australasian Student Christian Movement. This was to give a sense of unity as it was in keeping with the names of the other nations' groups. In 1921 the New Zealand division gained full independence and became the New Zealand Student Christian Movement. The local branches were referred to as Christian Unions until 1928 when they became officially known as 'branches of the Student Christian Movement'. For clarity I have referred to the group throughout this booklet as the Student Christian Movement (SCM).

being missions oriented, he envisaged a group that would provide solid Bible study for students, engage youth in social study (or more specifically 'Christian sociology'), unite Christians, and 'christianise' the future leaders and power holders of the world.<sup>6</sup> He later added that Australasia was a favourable place because of its location, holding 'the key to the Pacific Island world'.<sup>7</sup>

### The Early Development of the Movement in New Zealand

Due to the dynamic leadership and the 'assured co-operation of the foremost clergymen and Christian educators, editors and statesmen'<sup>8</sup> the largely Methodist and Presbyterian movement quickly began to develop and find its niche in society and the university. (While the movement also spread into schools, teachers colleges and divinity colleges, and even in one instance to a group of nurses, its focal point was the university.)<sup>9</sup> Leadership and the support of people in positions of power was essential if the movement was to have credibility and influence in academic institutions.<sup>10</sup> Rutherford Waddell, a Presbyterian minister renowned for his contribution to legislation guaranteeing better conditions for garment makers in the 1890s,<sup>11</sup> was the Otago SCM chairman and a member of the movement's advisory committee.<sup>12</sup> With regular reports in the Presbyterian paper, the *Christian Outlook* (later the *Outlook*),

<sup>6</sup>John R. Mott, *Strategic Points in the World's Conquest*, New York, 1897, quoted in *Christian Outlook*, 28 May 1898, p.216. This first appeared as part of an article in *Men: A Young Man's Paper*, 12 December 1896.

<sup>7</sup>Mott, 'A Forward Missionary Movement in Australasia', Report Letter no.3, 1903, John R. Mott Papers 45/3/117/f.1937, Yale Divinity Library (Y.Div). Copy in possession of Allan Davidson, St John's College (SJC), Auckland.

<sup>8</sup>John R. Mott, Report Letter to the Members of the Christian Unions, 8 July 1896, Mott Papers 45/3/117/f.1931, Y.Div. Copy in possession of Allan Davidson, SJC.

<sup>9</sup>During different periods groups existed on the campuses of Massey, Lincoln and Waikato, but it was in the colleges of Otago, Auckland, Canterbury and Victoria that the movement was strongest and most influential.

<sup>10</sup>The movement operated on a series of levels. While the New Zealand sources for this period do not reveal the specific details of the hierarchical organisation of the Australasian SCM, after 1921 when the movement in New Zealand became independent, the organisation is outlined very clearly. Each branch of the movement (including the schools) had its own executive, with a district council operating in each of the four main centres as its supervisor. This district council was made up of representatives of each of the branches. The dominion executive controlled these councils and was responsible for the administration of the movement. Convention, which met once a year, was the 'parliament'. General work and policies of the SCM were discussed and recommendations were made to the general committee. The general committee was the governing organisation of the movement which met twice a year. There could be a number of secretaries, but there was usually two: the general secretary who was the general co-ordinator, and the headquarters secretary who carried out the office work. (This structure began to collapse in the late 1960s and was abandoned altogether by the 1970s.) See Joan Benton (Anderson), 'New Zealand Student Christian Movement: History for the WSCF Jubilee', 1945, p.2. In possession of Joan Anderson.

<sup>11</sup>Waddell was known for his Christian socialist concerns after he complained about the conditions of garment makers to the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland in November, 1888. While Waddell was largely unsuccessful with regard to the churches, he was appointed to the Royal Commission to investigate 'sweating' which contributed to the passing of the Factories Act of 1894. With links to the union and labour movements, his concern and action was also one of the factors which led to the establishment of the Tailoresses union. See John McKean, *The Road to Secularisation in Presbyterian Dunedin: The First Fifty Years of the Otago Settlement*, Dunedin, 1993, p.28.

<sup>12</sup>*Australasian Intercollegian*, vol.1, November 1898, p.3.



both clergy and lay people were exposed to SCM news. A column in each of the university magazines ensured that other students and academics were aware of its activities. When the travelling secretary of the movement, W.H Sallmon, visited New Zealand in 1898 he was invited by Bishop Cowie to a gathering at Bishops Court, in Auckland, to give 'clergy of the various denominations, gentlemen interested in educational matters and some leading citizens' the opportunity to hear him speak.<sup>13</sup>

Sallmon was particularly influential in the early development of the movement. His task as travelling secretary was to provide encouragement to the existing branches, establish new ones, and provide a link between the various groups. When he visited New Zealand in 1898 Sallmon encouraged the formation of the branch at Victoria University College and founded ten school's branches, including the Te Aute Native College branch.<sup>14</sup> According to P.E. Sutton the SCM at Te Aute was to become one of the most influential forces in the evangelisation of Maori.<sup>15</sup> Peter Buck, Apirana Ngata and F.A. Bennett were all involved and were presumably the reason that in 1926 J.B. Condliffe attributed the 'great work of the Young Maori Party' to the Te Aute SCM.<sup>16</sup>

The SCM's activities were similar to those of other Christian groups, such as the denominational Bible Classes and YMCA groups. However the movement had a specific priority which it sought to implement through its activities: preparing and educating students as future Christian leaders and missionaries. While discussions were held on the practical questions relating to Christian work, it was acknowledged from the beginning that the SCM's most important work was in 'bringing Christian influences to bear on a class which tends to drift into a purely secular line of thought.'<sup>17</sup> It was observed by one writer that while general philanthropic work was increasing in the churches, the theory and theology that naturally led to this activity was often left to the clergy. The future lay leaders needed to be equipped so that people in all walks of life would be exposed to the claims and principles of Christianity. The writer stated his belief in the seriousness of the task in the *Outlook*:

That the men who must in the future take a leading part in educational and public life should have their thoughts guided by a Christian view of the world has a significance beyond what we can at present measure....we must regard this movement as a great and serious effort to mould the higher life of the near future according to Christian ideals.<sup>18</sup>

Philanthropic work, while important, was seen as a natural extension of learning and thinking. While the movement included individuals who engaged practically in social reform, it was the theory behind it, and the theology which validated social concern that its leaders envisaged as being of the utmost importance. Up until the mid-1960s this was the SCM's main function: education rather than action, theory instead of practice.

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<sup>13</sup> *Christian Outlook*, 16 April 1898, p.144.

<sup>14</sup> *Outlook*, 28 May 1898, p.216.

<sup>15</sup> P.E. Sutton, 'The New Zealand Student Christian Movement, 1896-1936', MA Thesis, Canterbury University, 1946, p.18.

<sup>16</sup> J.B. Condliffe, 'Report of the New Zealand Missionary Conference, April 1926', *News Sheet*, no.3, June 1926, p.24, HL.

<sup>17</sup> *Outlook*, 21 January 1899, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> *Outlook*, 21 January 1899, p.1.

Thus addresses, discussions and lectures were regarded as the central activities of the movement. The study circle, a concept implemented by Sallmon, gave the opportunity for groups of 10-15 students to engage in Bible study and discuss their beliefs. Leaders felt that study circles were crucial because members found 'these informal discussions helpful both to their thinking powers and in giving definiteness [sic] to their religious views.'<sup>19</sup> Their perceived importance was reflected in the Otago branch meetings where fluctuating levels were the bane of the executive committee.<sup>20</sup> Public addresses, branch meetings and Sunday teas (which incorporated food as well as a lecture) were all regular and important events, where biblical, theological and social teaching could be disseminated, and listeners could be challenged on an intellectual level. Reading material and Bible study books were made available to students through a library run by the SCM and, later, a theological book shop (eventually closed down in the early 1960s under the general secretary, Malcolm Johnston, because of financial difficulties).

While ideas and education were important to the SCM, practical community work was not neglected in this period. The Victoria University College SCM carried out social work in Te Aro. The women ran a club for girls and the men 'took charge of the educational and religious work at the Boy's Institute.'<sup>21</sup> This was later taken over by the Social Service League. In 1900 the Auckland University College branch of the SCM helped run a night school in Parnell, and was also involved in the 'Mission to the Streets and Lanes'.<sup>22</sup> In Auckland in the late 1890s members of the SCM were involved in teaching night classes in Parnell. Women members were also responsible for handing out refreshments at school socials.<sup>23</sup> From 1896 SCM members in Christchurch taught night classes and provided entertainment on a Sunday evening at Gordon Hall, a youth centre catering for teenage boys. Members taught a range of subjects including maths, shorthand, ambulance, Bible, and gym, with the aim of bringing about 'physical, mental and spiritual improvement'.<sup>24</sup> Difficult to run because of the pressure of college work and other commitments, this project was eventually abandoned when the building was leased to different tenants.

Social activities had a dual purpose; they provided an opportunity for mixing and attracted new members to the movement. Tramps, picnics and camps were two such examples. Singing became an important part of these activities; hymns, popular songs and humorous ditty's contributed to the sense of community and common purpose. At one outing in Auckland, a picnic around a bonfire was followed by spontaneous song.

We then marched up to the house of our host, Mr. Wright, gave three cheers, the College haka and yell (the men), and marched up the road, singing Gaudeamus

<sup>19</sup>*Kiwi*, vol.3, no.1, May 1907, p.48.

<sup>20</sup>At the Otago branch of the SCM there was frequent discussion about the attendance levels of the study circles, with attempts to cater to the needs of students by holding them in lunch-times and weekends.

<sup>21</sup>J.C. Beaglehole, *Victoria University College: An Essay Towards a History*, Wellington, 1949, p.123.

<sup>22</sup>Fay Hercock, *A Democratic Minority: A Centennial History of the Auckland University Students Association*, Auckland, 1994, p.20.

<sup>23</sup>Auckland University College Christian Union (AUCCU) President's Report for 1898-9, p.2, Scrapbook c.1896-1920, KIN 003 3/1, Kinder Library (KL), SJC.

<sup>24</sup>Anon, 'Boy's Gordon Hall', pamphlet, 1898, pp.1-3, Scrapbook c.1896-1920, KIN 003 3/1, KL.

to the accompaniment of the drums (the billy beaten with a stick, and the teapot beaten with its lid).<sup>25</sup>

The chance to mix with the opposite sex was also an important part of the SCM and events such as this one were characterised by good humoured frivolity.

One man lost his hat through the window, which tribulation was greeted with roars of laughter. Another hat was sent round for donations, and a liberal response of empty caramel papers was made. However, he got the last of the caramels-after the bag had been handed round twice-and was apparently so cheered that he composed an ode to his hat, and gave a short history of its life.<sup>26</sup>

The opportunity for wider fellowship was evident at conferences. The first was held in Nelson in 1899, attended by 100 members from all over Australasia. It included 'Fred Bennett...with his band of young Maoris' as well as missionary leaders from Japan, China, India and the Pacific Islands.<sup>27</sup> From 1903 conferences were held annually for the New Zealand division and were one of the highlights of the year. The enthusiasm for camps and conferences continued throughout the SCM's existence. One member in the 1950s revealed his enthusiasm when he stated: 'I'm going to conference next year if I have to pawn my maths books, swim the strait and hitch-hike the rest of the way'.<sup>28</sup>

The work of the SCM in the colleges fulfilled two important functions. It provided services for new students as well as making the SCM known throughout the university. At the varying colleges SCM members edited the fresher's handbook, a booklet explaining the workings and facilities of the university to new students. Each branch organised the second-hand bookstall at the beginning of each academic year (a job that has continued at Otago university until the present day). In 1908 largely due to the efforts of the SCM in Otago the Student Union building was built.<sup>29</sup> The movement was also responsible for organising an inter-denominational service once a year, open to all university students.<sup>30</sup> The 'federation day', in which students went into local churches to speak on the work of the WSCF, later replaced these services. However, some branches continued to organise them on a less formal basis.

## The First Decade

### 1. A Renewed Missions Focus?

Born out of the Student Volunteer Movement, missionary work was seen as an important priority. In 1896 the first president of the Otago branch, Iva Bertram, warned members to remember the 'danger of which Mr. Mott spoke'.<sup>31</sup> Bertram noted that 'missionary and evangelistic zeal tends to exist in intensity proportional to the square of the distance from the University'.<sup>32</sup> By 1903 the leaders of the movement

<sup>25</sup> *Kiwi*, vol.9, no.1, June 1914, p.16.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> C.E.W., 'Auxiliary Looking Back', *Student*, no.4, June 1950, p.23.

<sup>28</sup> *Student*, no.1, March 1950, p.21.

<sup>29</sup> Sam Elworthy, *Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago*, Dunedin, 1990, p.28.

<sup>30</sup> AUCCU, untitled pamphlet, c.1910, Scrapbook 1896-1920s, KIN 003 3/1, KL.

<sup>31</sup> Iva E. Bertram, 'President's Report for the Year Ending September 19, 1896', MS, NZSCM Otago Branch Record Book, 1896-1904, OUSCM Records, 90-138, HL.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



were particularly concerned about the lack of enthusiasm about missions, and the way the movement's discussions and activities seemed to substitute for active involvement in the mission field. It was felt that while education and discussion were important, they should lead to active commitment to missions lest the movement become nothing more than (in Mott's words) a 'talking society'.<sup>33</sup>

The lack of enthusiasm for missions by members was most obvious in New Zealand itself. While appeals for greater awareness of 'Maori work' appeared periodically at conferences, the response was negligible.<sup>34</sup> In 1900 the President of the Otago Christian Union, W.H. Mawson, observed that the church showed little interest in the needs of Maori and offered a challenge to this lethargy:

The claims of Foreign Missions have been brought before us from time to time in our own meetings, and in a recent meeting the needs of the Maori people roused a great deal of interest....The students of the Maori Colleges are themselves making efforts to raise the conditions of their people. Could not the students of our University Colleges do something to assist them?<sup>35</sup>

The turnout at another meeting reflected a disinterest in the subject of missions to Maori, or the problems facing Maori in society. A Maori academic, Dr Wi Repa, gave a talk on the 'Amelioration of the Maori People', but it was reported that 'the attendance was disappointingly small, especially the men'.<sup>36</sup>

Mott, who agreed that missions was the weakest part of the Australasian movement, was invited back to renew the movement's vision.<sup>37</sup> After carrying out a series of lectures specifically aimed at the SCM in Dunedin, Mott held a conference on home and foreign missions in Christchurch open to the public.<sup>38</sup> His impact was phenomenal at both; his charismatic personality drew people towards him. Christina Fairlie (nee Hain) and her husband Walter, attended the conference in Dunedin. Walter was so enthusiastic that he also made the trip to Christchurch to hear Mott speak.<sup>39</sup> One student who attended his meetings in Dunedin described Mott: 'Thoroughgoing and intense, quiet and severely logical, he was a man to put iron in the blood, and to stiffen the backbone of those who listened'.<sup>40</sup> In Mott's closing meeting, he encouraged those in the SCM to continue strengthening the movement from within as it was making a difference to the world through missionary work.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Letter to the Members of the Christian Unions of Australasia from John R. Mott, 8 July 1896, Mott Papers 45/3/117/f.1931, Y.Div. Copy in possession of Allan Davidson, SJC.

<sup>34</sup>In 1901 Mawson reported that 'Mr. Bennett gave a stirring address on Maori work at the beginning of the session, which I think has led to a better understanding of the (work) needs of the Maori race.' See W.H. Mawson, 'President's Report for the year ending September 1901', 1901, n.p. NZSCM Otago Branch Record Book 1896-1904, Otago University Student Christian Movement (OUSCM) Records, 90-138, HL. The address did not appear to have any noticeable effect on the movement.

<sup>35</sup>J. Mawson, 'President's Report for the year ending September 19th, 1900, n.p. NZSCM Otago Branch Record Book 1896-1904, OUSCM Records, 90-138, HL.

<sup>36</sup>*Otago University Review (OUR)*, vol.21, no.2, June 1907, p.53.

<sup>37</sup>Mott, 'A Forward Missionary Movement in Australasia', n.p.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>Christina Hain's diary entries from 27-31 April 1903, focus on the Mott visit. See Diary of Christina Hain, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) Archives, Knox College, Dunedin.

<sup>40</sup>George Inglis, 'Mott in New Zealand, 1903', in *News Sheet*, no.3, June 1926, p.10, HL.

<sup>41</sup>Mott, 'The Need of a Forward Union - An Address to the Student Conference on Home and Foreign Missions', 2-3 May, 1903, cited in Sutton, p.23



This stimulated activity within the branches of the SCM. Missionary study circles were re-established in each of the branches. The increased enthusiasm was reflected in the activities of students, some of whom became involved in speaking on world missions and handing out relevant literature in church services. Greater attempts at reaching those at 'home' as well as overseas were demonstrated in the 'open air campaigns' held by Otago students in 1906, featuring hymns and public addresses.<sup>42</sup> In Canterbury the influence of Mott was long standing. In 1923 it was noted that around '21 of the 71 of the NZSCM who are or have been on the mission field belonged to the Canterbury College Union, and are serving in Africa, India, China, South America, the Pacific Islands and the Maori Mission'.<sup>43</sup> Missionary talks once became popular with topics such as 'Missionary Excellence and Privilege', 'Missionary Duty and Decision', 'Missionary Call and Purpose' being highlights of the branches programme.<sup>44</sup> The establishment of a New Zealand Co-operating Committee on Home and Foreign Affairs in 1903 contributed to this strengthened missions focus. The movement flourished in the following years.

By 1908, despite declining church attendance, over a third of the university students in Australasia were members of the SCM.<sup>45</sup> In 1915 membership was 4762, an increase of 3192 students in a decade.<sup>46</sup> Some branches were particularly strong. In the same year the Otago branch of the Student Christian Movement had an enrolment of 165 members consisting of 102 men and 63 women. This was slightly over 47% of the total university roll.<sup>47</sup>

## 2. Moving into the world

The first decade of the movement's life was also characterised by a move towards a keen desire for the application of the intellect and reason to discover truth. The great revivals of the well known evangelists Moody and Sankey had reached their peak, and this broad missionary mind-set was beginning to decline, perhaps explaining the need for Mott to return in 1903. Modernity was revealing new ways of perceiving the world and Christianity.

Established in this climate, the movement opened itself up to Protestants of different shades of belief rather than limiting itself to any one interpretation of God or the gospel. It was observed with pride at the meeting conducted by Mott in New Zealand in 1903 that '[e]very Protestant Church in that part of the world was represented as well as *every phase of thought* in those Churches [my emphasis].'<sup>48</sup>

The SCM strongly emphasised open membership, or 'inclusivity'. While the movement had specific aims and a basis of membership, it did not commit itself to a central doctrine or creed. Membership aimed to be inclusive, open to anyone regardless of the nature of their faith. The words of Jack Bennett, the editor of *Open*

<sup>42</sup> *OUR*, vol.20, no.1 May 1906, p.24

<sup>43</sup> M.W. 'Canterbury University Christian Union', notes, 1923, p.3, ATL.

<sup>44</sup> See 'Christian Union Notes', *OUR*, vol.18, no.2 June 1904.

<sup>45</sup> *OUR*, vol.22, no.1, May 1908, p.62. The strength of individual branches of the SCM did vary. Otago was one of the strongest and most enthusiastic branches. As early as 1905 the Otago Christian Union had a membership of 114. With an attendance at the University of 286, this was approximately 40% of all students. See Minutes of the Cabinet of the OUSCM, Dunedin, August 1905, OUSCM Records, 90-138, HL.

<sup>46</sup> See *Outlook*, 18 May 1915, cited in Sutton, pp.23-24.

<sup>47</sup> *OUR*, vol.22, no.3, August 1908, p.105.

<sup>48</sup> Mott, 'A Forward Missionary Movement in Australasia', n.p.

*Windows* (the magazine of the SCM) in 1931, were applicable from the founding of the movement: 'we dare not narrow the ground of our union to the exclusion of those who have drawn near to the "heart of the matter" by another road. Our witness must be as broadly Christian as it is possible to make it.'<sup>49</sup> Members were instructed to look to their individual churches for detailed statements of faith. As nearly half those on the university rolls in New Zealand were members before the First World War, it can justifiably be assumed that there was considerable variation in beliefs.

The movement in the pre-war years was broadly influenced by liberal or 'modern' ideas, exhibiting concern for a faith that took into account the challenges wrought by modernity. This was evidenced in the comments of the Rev Dewdney, a speaker at the 1907-8 summer conference, when he said, 'Christianity had no cause to fear the investigations of science. Certain details of the creeds might have to be revised, but the essentials would remain.'<sup>50</sup> There was an emphasis by some on the need to subject Christianity to deep thought and study: considering Christianity in the light of increasing knowledge and rational thought. The Rev Hewitson, in a public lecture to the four branches of the SCM, examined an idea which became the basis of discussion and addresses, particularly in the second decade of the movement's existence: the need for 'open-mindedness' with a view to finding the truth.<sup>51</sup>

The branches of Victoria and Otago were particularly enthusiastic about this aspect, influenced by strong leadership with liberal leanings, particularly David Picken, Professor of Mathematics at Victoria University College, and William Salmond, Professor of Mental and Moral Health at Otago University College.

In 1896 Salmond gave two addresses open to all students. Examining 'Christianity and Culture' and 'The Intellectual Life in Relation to Religion', he concluded that:

[o]ne of the most common sources of offence given by the evangelical religion of the modern churches is the presentation of itself in a morbid and truncated form of life, on account of its real or apparent divorce from intelligence, and generally from a wholesome human nature; and certainly we cannot expect to commend a religion either as good or as true, as it seems in our hand to dwarf the mind or poison the springs of natural feeling or simple human interest.<sup>52</sup>

Salmond viewed Christianity as necessitating intellectual understanding. If this was compromised or ignored, Christianity would be grossly undermined and the witness to the gospel would be lost.

Picken similarly conveyed liberal ideas to students at the Victoria SCM branch, known for its 'intellectual vigour'.<sup>53</sup> Encouraging intellectualism and broadmindedness when considering the implications of Christianity 'he asserted emphatically that the Christian student had a duty first to face his own intellectual and religious difficulties and then secondly, and just as imperatively, he should try to understand the point of view of the students who were opposed to the Christian programme.'<sup>54</sup> Picken was

<sup>49</sup> *Open Windows (OW)*, vol. 5, no. 2, April 1931, pp. 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> *Outlook*, 18 January 1908, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> *OUR*, vol. 17, no. 4, September 1903, p. 20.

<sup>52</sup> *OUR*, vol. 10, no. 5, October 1896, p. 152.

<sup>53</sup> Anon, 'Victoria University College Christian Union 1899-1924', n.d., p. 1, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

not threatened by new ideas; like Salmond, he encouraged them. This openness to a variety of ideas and beliefs (reflected in the interdenominational nature of the movement) meant that the SCM was open to ideas associated with the 'social gospel', important in the next phase of the movement's life.

## The Second Decade

### 1. A Social Focus

The rising interest in the meaning of Christianity in the contemporary world in the first two decades of the SCM's life contributed to a heightened consciousness of social issues and problems. In the first decade of the SCM's life, the occasional address examined social problems and offered solutions largely within the existing order. Social concern was not a sentiment: it was viewed as a natural extension of one's salvation and faith. One speaker at an SCM conference in 1908 saw the value of applying Christian ideas to social life to bring about the improvement of society, viewing it as inextricably bound up with individual salvation. A report on this address in the *Outlook* commented on the speaker's emphasis on the need to look beyond the social 'environment' for the answers: 'It is the wrong relation to God that [is] the malady of the race. To get right with God [is] to become a social reformer, and greater still an evangelist.'<sup>55</sup> Individual transformation was generally seen as a higher calling than social reform. Through the salvation of individuals, society would be saved and changed.

However another strand of thought was also becoming recognisable in the middle years of the first decade of the twentieth century. The 'social gospel' in broad terms was an interpretation of the gospel which looked to the material needs of society, as well as being a message of spiritual salvation for the individual. While in general the churches in New Zealand were more concerned individual salvation, the social gospel did begin to have some impact in the early part of the century in the SCM. The movement's openness to a wide spectrum of beliefs and thought allowed ideas associated with the social gospel to be disseminated throughout the movement.

By around 1905 members were beginning to recognise that Christianity was not just about good works or community service, but about the needs of society in a much wider context. William Salmond from Otago University put forward these views with a particular agenda: opposing the moralistic crusades of Prohibitionists.<sup>56</sup> In 1905 the general secretary of the YMCA, Mr. H.N. Holmes, spoke to the Victoria College Christian Union on 'The Social Problems of the City'. He argued that it was part of the responsibility of Christians to help solve the problems of vice and crime in the community.<sup>57</sup> In 1906 the Rev W. A. Evans addressed students of the SCM at Wellington on 'Sociological Theory in Relation to the Teachings of St. Paul'. A member of the audience commented on the challenge made by the minister: 'He showed that Paul was never a slave to the letter of the law but used his own judgement: so in our dealings with our fellows we must not tie ourselves down to

<sup>55</sup>*Outlook*, 18 January 1908, p.13.

<sup>56</sup>In 1911 Salmond made a stand against prohibition with his booklet entitled *Prohibition: A Blunder*. In it he argued that imposing a law, which in essence banned alcohol consumption through the prohibition of its sale, was an inadequate way of restraining individual moral behaviour. In other words, changing society would not alter the morality of its members, therefore defeating the purpose.

See William Salmond, *Prohibition: A Blunder*, 4th ed., Dunedin, 1911.

<sup>57</sup>*Victoria College Review (VCR)*, vol.4, October 1905, pp.43-44.



conventionalities, but assist them as we best see fit.<sup>58</sup> The Rev Evans realised that serving humanity was not about Christian conventions or traditions, but about meeting its needs (whether spiritual or material) in the most effective way.

This attitude began to pervade many of the talks and was the primary focus of the national conference in Cambridge in 1911-12. Entitled 'Jesus Christ and the Social Question' the conference aimed to encourage members to become involved in the study and investigation of various social issues.<sup>59</sup> An address by John MacKenzie, 'The Call for Consecrated Workers', called for dedication to the furtherance of the Kingdom of God on earth 'in the home lands where social evils and extreme poverty blind men to the vision of the highest - in the foreign field where "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed".<sup>60</sup> Another speaker at this particular conference was the visiting American 'Professor' W.T. Mills, who was at this time attempting to organise New Zealand labour.<sup>61</sup> He addressed members on socialism contributing to a discussion of class oppression and competition. A participant commented: 'Numerous were the burning issues raised, and the vital problems discussed...such as the justification on Christian Principles of the present day competitive and capitalistic systems; and again, the possibility of self development becoming a luxury.'<sup>62</sup> This led to a more communal interest in 'The Social Problem', a term was adopted at this conference to

express the fact that we are still far short of having reached any social ideal, that in all industrial countries the condition of the great masses of people is a menace to social progress; and that as citizens desirous of seeing a healthy and contented civilisation we are all deeply concerned to combat bad housing conditions, unemployment, disease, and, in short, poverty with all its causes and consequences.<sup>63</sup>

Studies on specific problems and their implications, such as 'Social Degradation', were implemented in the following years.<sup>64</sup> In 1911 an administrative body called the New Zealand Co-operating Committee was established so that the New Zealand division of the SCM could operate more efficiently. This allowed the movement to concentrate on its own local and national social concerns. When W.H.P. MacKenzie (later the chairman of the New Zealand movement) addressed the movement in 1914 on 'Social Service', he hoped the work would soon be a permanent feature of the movement, 'obtaining good results both theoretical and practical'.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>VCR, no.2, October 1906, p.34.

<sup>59</sup>At the 1910-11 summer conference at Waimate 'Social Problems' was among the topics discussed. See *Outlook*, 17 January 1911, p.23.

<sup>60</sup>*Outlook*, 30 January 1912, p.25.

<sup>61</sup>Erik Olssen, *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-14*, Auckland, 1988, pp.56, 129-30.

<sup>62</sup>*Outlook*, 30 January 1912, p.25.

<sup>63</sup>*OUR*, vol.28, no.2, October 1914, p.64.

<sup>64</sup>Some groups were influenced more quickly than others by the social aspect. Victoria College was known for its interest in sociological and intellectual concerns, and seemed particularly open to the ideas associated with the 'social gospel'. Otago and Canterbury colleges similarly demonstrated a keen interest in the social aspect. The Auckland University College SCM noticeably lagged behind the other groups in its choice of 'social' topics, and was known for its more 'staid' discussions, perhaps due to weaker leadership.

<sup>65</sup>*OUR*, vol.28, no.1, July 1914, p.56.

Another important feature of this conference was the inclusion of representatives from the Auckland University College Student Association, and the formation of the Social Service League.<sup>66</sup> The league was formed to inspire students to have high social ideals and help actively bring about social progress.<sup>67</sup> Its membership was open to anyone; while it was initiated by the SCM it was not exclusive, including those with no religious inclinations who were interested in examining social problems. The formation of the Social Service League (established in the other colleges over the following two years) led to praise by the editor of the Auckland University College magazine, *Kiwi*, as it undermined criticisms that the movement was too narrowly concerned with 'personal piety...and...personal spiritual culture'.<sup>68</sup>

Criticism of the SCM was not infrequent in the college magazines. Some critics thought it was too involved in university activities, and was taking over the role of the student association. Others felt it was removed from university life, and was an elitist clique. One student commented:

This is the fatal error of Christian Unionism...it specialises too much, and it talks too much. It draws fine distinctions and splits hairs. Only some things are 'worthwhile', the rest of life is beyond the pale. Of the doctrine of doing with all thy might whatsoever thy hand finds to do, they know nothing. That abundant vitality which does things simply because they need doing, has been talked out of existence.<sup>69</sup>

While the involvement of the SCM in the Social Service League countered this criticism, the league collapsed over the war period and was not re-established. However, there was involvement by the SCM in international aid, with fund-raising and workdays to help refugees in Europe in the immediate years after the war.

A number of members (particularly in later years) associated themselves with the labour movement and demonstrated an interest in economic theories of social reconstruction. The SCM was linked with labour through some of its leaders from 1910, in particular John T. Paul and the Rev Moses Ayrton.<sup>70</sup> At the Victoria College branch of the SCM, in 1911, an address had been conducted on 'The Church and the Labour Question', examining the relationship between the two.<sup>71</sup> With the attendance of representatives at the Unity Conference of Labour Organisations in 1912, the movement had an unofficial association with labour. At the SCM summer conference of 1911 it was unanimously voted that delegates should be sent to this labour conference, 'with a view to investigating at closer range the ideals and practical proposals of the Labour Movement, and with a view to ascertaining what should be the relationship of the Christian Student to the Labour Movement generally'.<sup>72</sup> Picken, one of the four SCM delegates at this meeting, reported back to the Executive

<sup>66</sup> Hercock, *A Democratic Minority*, p.20.

<sup>67</sup> *OUR*, vol.28, no.2, October 1914, p.66

<sup>68</sup> *Kiwi*, vol.9, no.1, June 1914, p.14.

<sup>69</sup> *Canterbury College Review (CCR)* no.49, June 1917, p.15.

<sup>70</sup> Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, Auckland, 1980, p.120.

<sup>71</sup> *VCR*, vol.10, June 1911, p.40.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of the Executive of the New Zealand Co-operating Committee of Australasian Student Christian Union (ASCU), Christchurch, January 1912, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617-95, ATL.

Committee of the Australasian Student Christian Union in June, 'endorsing copies of the United Party's Constitution and Platform.'<sup>73</sup>

## 2. Women in Leadership

It was in the second half of the decade that women gained a greater degree of power in the movement. Women had always been present in numbers equal to that of men, but in early records they are more noticeable by their silence than their voice. They were certainly present on missionary lists. Captain Anne Smyth of the Salvation Army spent ten years in Japan.<sup>74</sup> Winifred Griffiths went to Bombay in 1906 as a worker at the Missionary Settlement for University Women (MSUW).<sup>75</sup> Some women were also involved in the Maori mission. However, while women occupied leadership roles in the WSCF, those in the Australasian movement were still limited to lesser roles.

The visit of Ruth Rouse, the WSCF travelling Secretary, in 1908 had a profound impact. Described (somewhat ironically) by one writer as the 'feminine counterpart of J.R. Mott',<sup>76</sup> Rouse was a respected leader and ecumenical pioneer. She was involved with the MSUW in India, which was also supported by the SCM in New Zealand. Rouse came to New Zealand partly to encourage women to become more involved in missionary work. She suggested that in New Zealand there was a loss of evangelistic fervour and lack of interest in missions (apart from the Bombay Settlement).<sup>77</sup> She also insisted that women take up the task of leadership in the movement at a national level. Two months after she left, the first women's student conference of the SCM was held in Christchurch. Florence Holden of Sydney was appointed travelling secretary of the movement in Australasia.<sup>78</sup> For the first time women were given the opportunity to be representatives on the ASCM Committee as well as branch committees. The following year Margaret Walker was nominated as the first New Zealand representative of the ASCM to attend a WSCF conference in Oxford.<sup>79</sup> Another New Zealander, Constance Grant was encouraged by Rouse's visit and became involved in the federation at an international level.<sup>80</sup>

During the First World War women were equipped to take over the main leadership roles, and while other student clubs floundered, the SCM continued its programme. Numbers dropped because many of the men were fighting at the Front. However the SCM was better equipped than some of the other student clubs because of the experience of women members in leadership and administrative positions. It was not surprising that the return of male leadership in the years after the war caused some members to complain. A certain Miss Tolley made her feelings clear in 1921; she

<sup>73</sup> Minutes of the Executive of the New Zealand Co-operating Committee of ASCU, Christchurch, June 1912, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:95, ATL.

<sup>74</sup> Anon, *List of Australasian Student Volunteers*, Melbourne, 1907, p.1, WSCF Papers 46/247/2045, Y.Div. Copy in possession of Allan Davidson, SJC.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> *Canterbury College Review (CCR)* no.29, May 1908, p.52.

<sup>77</sup> Rouse noted that since the founding of the movement the New Zealand division had only sent out 14 missionaries: 11 overseas and 3 to the Maori mission. See *Australasian Intercollegian*, vol.11, September 1908, p.19.

<sup>78</sup> Stanley S. Addison, 'Current Comment', *The Australasian Intercollegian*, vol.23, no.3 1920, p.66.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Suzanne de Dietrich, *Fifty Years of History: the World Student Christian Federation 1895-1945*, Geneva, 1995, p.36.

commented that while men did all the talking in meetings, it was women that did most of the work.<sup>81</sup>

The First World War also brought about other changes in the movement. According to the Auckland University College magazine *Kiwi* there was also an 'increased tone of seriousness among the members of the Union' and a clearer understanding of the task that lay ahead.<sup>82</sup> By the end of the war, the movement had entered into a phase which saw it develop its focus on the contemporary world to a much greater extent.

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<sup>81</sup>Minutes of the NZSCM General Committee, Christchurch, August 1925, NZSCM Papers, SCM Papers 1617: 96, ATL.

<sup>82</sup>*Kiwi*, vol. 12, August 1917, p.57.



## 'A Vision that Widens Every Day' 1918-1935

### The Effects of the First World War on the SCM

Organised religion suffered during the war period. Many young people became deeply disillusioned with the churches after seeing the destruction and loss of life during the war. The churches provided no solutions, and the appointment of chaplains to the military seemed only to condone warfare. As Hugh Jackson has observed, 'the actual thinking of churchgoing Protestants about religion had become inexact, formless and diverse'.<sup>1</sup>

In the SCM this diversity of belief and widening of vision became apparent. A contempt for the churches as outdated and limiting institutions was an attitude that was not uncommon in the SCM in the 1920s and early 1930s. Stanley Addison, general secretary before the First World War, observed the changes in the movement after it:

I think the chief thing we have all learnt is the nearness of the Kingdom of God, and how, by expressing our belief in that reality, we can help bring it in our time. The old incentives to good conduct have gone, such as the burning Hell and the glowing Heaven. We are now drawn by a vision that widens every day, and includes this world as well as the next. We are drawn forward by this vision, because we feel how realisable it is, and how we are working in harmony with the Creator in His plan for bringing love and justice into all the relationships of life, and getting rid of fear and all the other inhibitions that make for a falling short of the high purpose He has for us and His world. Whatever the future holds we are bound to go on in this high adventure, sure in the belief that the kingdom of God still awaits us at the threshold, and that we must bend every energy and all our effort towards helping to usher it in.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of 'brotherhood', associated with social gospel theology and liberal Christianity, led to an increased concern with the material problems of contemporary society. Articles in *Open Windows* (the magazine of the movement from 1927) examined Christianity in the world and its relationship to modern society. 'Christianity and Philosophy', 'Science and Religion', and 'Christianity and Psychology' were common titles. While ideas associated with the 'social gospel' were present in the pre World War One period, they began to dominate the concerns of the leadership from 1918. With the broadening of beliefs this focus on society and its material needs provided a common focus, while spiritual ideas remained as diverse as the SCM's members.

### The SCM After the First World War: An International Emphasis

The concern with the contemporary world was initially demonstrated in theory, with the study of social and international issues, and practically, through material aid to war victims in Europe. This work was carried out through the European Student Relief programme (later to become the International Student Service) set up by WSCF after the war. Its purpose was to provide material and spiritual reconstruction in war-

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930*, Wellington, 1987, p.125.

<sup>2</sup>*Australasian Intercollegian*, vol.23, June 1920, pp.66-67.



torn countries. Work days by students and the collection of old clothes were the two most common responses by SCM members in New Zealand.

World wide fellowship was not just an ideal but was rapidly becoming a reality for the movement. NZSCM members regularly represented the movement at international conferences, while overseas visitors brought news of the wider activities of the federation and social problems in a broader context. Fay Hercock notes that the highlight of the year 1931 and again in 1937 was the visit of Dr. T.Z. Koo (frequently mentioned in *Open Windows*), who was the World Student Christian Federation Vice President, and had connections to the League of Nations and the Institute of Pacific Relations.<sup>3</sup> Koo's attractive personality inspired young people, and his enthusiasm was evident in his addresses to the movement:

There is nothing of the ascetic [sic] about Dr. Koo's appearance. Though of slender build, he gives an impression of strength and energy. As he speaks his face breaks into a smile and his large brown eyes sparkle. When his English fails him - which is very seldom - his expressive hands help him out of the difficulty.<sup>4</sup>

Missionaries, particularly Doris Gavin, also provided contact with the outside world. Gavin lived in Calcutta at a United Free Church boarding school where she taught the Bengali language,<sup>5</sup> and then became foreign secretary to the YMCA of India. She was supported by the SCM for 20 years, and contributed to *Open Windows* on several occasions, providing members with a wider understanding of her work and the Indian culture.<sup>6</sup>

While the war contributed to a broader focus on the work of the WSCF in the wider world, it also helped the movement develop a sense of identity as a New Zealand group. Communication had weakened during the war and the New Zealand division had operated largely in isolation from its Australian counterpart. While the New Zealand division had gained a degree of autonomy in 1911 with the establishment of its Co-operating Committee, which allowed it greater decision making powers, it was not until 1921 that the New Zealand branch formally declared its independence from Australia.

### **The 'Donald Grant' Era: The Second Half of the 1920s**

An international and social focus was prominent right through the second half of the 1920s, and the character of the movement was largely influenced by its general secretary. Donald Grant, a Scot, occupied the role from 1926-29 and was renowned for his Christian socialism and concern with action, rather than piety or doctrine. He was a charismatic personality who drew students to him, guiding them in the interpretation of the gospel in contemporary terms, and encouraging them to become aware of issues at a world level. This was perhaps partly due to his own five year involvement in post-war reconstruction in Europe.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Fay Hercock, 'We had these Ideals: An Account of the Student Christian Movement of Auckland University College, 1927-35', postgraduate history essay, University of Auckland, 1986, p.49.

<sup>4</sup>*Open Windows (OW)*, p.20.

<sup>5</sup>Report of Work in 1920; Statement of Accounts 1920 and Budget 1921', SCM Scrapbook, 1907-1931, New Zealand Student Christian Movement (NZSCM) Papers, MS Papers 1617:266, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.

<sup>6</sup>*OW*, vol.5, no.6, September 1931, p.23.

<sup>7</sup>Donald Grant to Miss Walker, 15 February 1925, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL.

Other prominent influences on this increasing interest in internationalism were SCM leaders and academics rather than student members. Walter Nash, J.B. Condliffe, Willis Airey and Ormond Burton aimed to make people aware of international issues. Although they shared many of the same ideals and a Christian faith, they also had other agendas: whether it was pacifism, relationships within the Pacific, Marxism, or economics.

## 1. Race Relations

In the middle of the 1920s race relations became a topic for discussion in the SCM but usually in an overseas context. In the foreword to Condliffe's *The Third Mediterranean in History*, Mott commented on the need for interest and serious study by universities on the problems of the Pacific Basin. He believed that 'the lands of the Pacific...present[ed] the greatest combination of grave and urgent problems and issues - economic, social, national, international, inter-racial and religious'.<sup>8</sup> A series of addresses and studies in the mid 1920s were dedicated to examining such problems. Amongst other books were *Christianity and the Race Problem*, *Racial Relations and the Way of Jesus*, *The Clash of Colour* and *The Problem of Race*.<sup>9</sup> The 1926 Annual Conference was on the topic of race relations.<sup>10</sup> This study was extended into action when it was decided, in 1927, that the SCM should financially support a Bantu student in tertiary education in New Zealand. The chosen student was Katide Piliso who arrived in 1931 to study medicine at Otago University. He left for Glasgow to pursue his studies part way through his degree because of unhappiness in New Zealand, but the NZSCM supported him till he graduated in 1936 and continued to contribute to the African scholarship fund.<sup>11</sup> Two Pacific councils were held in the 1930s: one in Java in 1933 and a second in California three years later. Representatives from New Zealand attended, bringing back reports on the issues raised at the conferences.<sup>12</sup>

Some members (usually academics) were aware of racial problems in New Zealand but provided few answers. In a report on the 1926 conference where Maori were discussed, Condliffe stated that it was generally agreed that the 'superficial imitation by the Maoris of Pakeha ways of life' was completely unsatisfactory in solving racial problems. However, the inherently paternalistic attitude remained: Maori were still children, only now they were beginning to grow up or die out.<sup>13</sup> The common view was one of ignorance of problems in Maori/Pakeha relations. Lel Sewell, travelling secretary from 1923-29 commented in 1929 in *Open Windows* on racial problems. Her comments appear to have reflected the general attitude of members:

As a student body we are more familiar with international and interracial life and problems....We...are very isolated; we are very prosperous and well-fed; we have no

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<sup>8</sup>John R. Mott, 'Foreword' in J.B. Condliffe, *The Third Mediterranean in History: An Introduction to Pacific Problems*, Christchurch, 1926.

<sup>9</sup>'Report of the General Committee', September 1926, p.1, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:113, ATL.

<sup>10</sup>Hercok, 'We Had These Ideals', p.49.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p.50.

<sup>12</sup>Suzanne de Dietrich, *Fifty Years of History: the World Student Christian Federation 1895-1945*, Geneva, 1995, p.64.

<sup>13</sup>Condliffe, 'Report of the New Zealand Missionary Conference, April 1926', *News Sheet*, no.3, June 1926, p.24, Hocken Library, Archives and Manuscripts (HL), Dunedin.

inter-racial or international problems at our very doors; nor are we suffering any pain for the sake of our own people right in the heart of our own national life.<sup>14</sup>

There were some notable exceptions. Willis Airey actively supported Apirana Ngata in his bid for Maori to be taught at the universities.<sup>15</sup> In the 1930s practical efforts were made by Jean Archibald (headquarters secretary from 1932-4) and the Leatham and Holt families (prominent in the Auckland movement) to house and educate Maori girls who came from poverty stricken homes or dysfunctional families.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Christian Socialism and Communism

The movement was influenced by a series of Christian socialists on its peripheries (apart from Donald Grant) who had links with the Labour party in the second half of the 1920s and the early 1930s. Walter Nash, a book agent for the SCM, and Arnold Nordmeyer, involved in the early 1920s in the Otago branch of the movement, both became involved in the Labour Party. In 1932 Nash replied to a query about Christian socialism, stating: 'Personally I am of the opinion that the Christian methods are the most profitable ones to employ in solving our economic problems.'<sup>17</sup> Nash applied his Christian ideals to politics.

Ormond Burton, war-hero and future pacifist, a Methodist and a keen contributor to SCM conferences and *Open Windows*, was also involved with the Labour Party in the 1920s. His socialism was largely an extension of his Christianity. Burton felt unable to commit himself completely to the party line because of its Bible in Schools policy and stood as an independent Christian socialist in the Eden electorate in 1928. He gained just 200 votes, in his words 'an overwhelming defeat'.<sup>18</sup> While his political career ended abruptly his interest in Christian socialism continued to develop, pervading his writing and influencing his attitudes. In his regular column in *Open Windows*, 'The Christian and His World', Burton argued that 'as Christians there is a definite responsibility of transforming the common life of men into a real and visible Kingdom of God'.<sup>19</sup> He commented in a later article that while most 'Christians sincerely believe that Jesus can save men from 'sin', they have no faith in him as the saviour of society. The solution of every problem must be ethical - and the ethics must be those of Jesus.'<sup>20</sup> Burton saw socialism as a natural extension of the Christian principles of the gospel, arguing that it was necessary to 'transform existing systems into an expression of Christian principles'.<sup>21</sup> He argued that this could not be done through the existing political parties, not even Labour. Christians, he believed, must form their own party.<sup>22</sup> His ideas seem to have received little comment or reaction in the correspondence column, suggesting an openness to leftist ideas within the SCM.

<sup>14</sup>Lel Sewell, 'I.S.S.', *OW*, vol.3, no.5, August 1929, p.9.

<sup>15</sup>Elsie Locke, *Student at the Gates*, Christchurch, 1981, p.44.

<sup>16</sup>Interview with Betty Holt by Fay Hercock, 7 January 1986. Transcript in the possession of Fay Hercock.

<sup>17</sup>Keith Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, Auckland, 1976, p.18.

<sup>18</sup>O.E. Burton, *Christian Action*, Levin, c.1970, p.9.

<sup>19</sup>Burton, 'The Christian and His World', *OW*, vol.2, no.2, April 1928, p.9.

<sup>20</sup>Burton, 'The Saviour of the World', quoted in Ernest Crane, *I Can Do No Other: A Biography of Ormond Burton*, Auckland, 1986, p.88.

<sup>21</sup>*OW*, vol.3, no.6, September 1929, p.15.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*



This was perhaps not surprising in a movement committed to the material as well as spiritual needs of humanity.

While it was Ormond Burton's faith that led him down the path of socialism, Willis Airey's faith was not so influential and eventually he discarded it altogether, dedicating his life instead to the study of Marxism. A lecturer in history and English at Christchurch Training College, Airey wrote a regular column in *Open Windows* entitled first 'International Affairs' and later 'The Great Society', which examined international problems and events such as disarmament, the naval programme of the US Congress, the League of Nations, and the Kellogg Pact. In 1929 he was appointed lecturer in history at Auckland University College, and with the formation of the International Relations Club in the university and his role in the League of Nations Union, he lessened his commitment to the SCM, eventually cutting himself off completely. While Airey was known for his gentle, quiet manner, his influence was profound. Arch Smyth, a member in the early 1920s remembered Airey speaking at a conference and was 'taken with his address'.<sup>23</sup> However many did not agree with his later more radical stance.<sup>24</sup>

The relationship between communism and Christianity frequented the pages of *Open Windows*, but debate was largely confined to an intellectual elite. The economist Professor Horace Belshaw, an associate of Airey's, contributed regularly to the magazine and in one instance described the Christian ethic as 'the same as the ideal of communism.' He believed in the premise of giving 'to each according to his need, from each according to his ability', adding 'Christianity does not, in my opinion, justify itself unless it recognises that the improvement of welfare in general on this earth, should be its main objective.' His use of the term 'communism' in no way made him a communist. He went on to clarify his comments: '[S]ince sedition hunting is not quite obsolete as a past time, I hasten to add that I do not suggest that as true Christians we should adopt Communist tactics and blow up the Bourgeoisie.'<sup>25</sup> Communism as an ideology was subscribed to only by a small minority. In 1932-3 there was a conference held by the Student Christian Movement to assemble the radical Christians in New Zealand and inspire action. The Army of Reconciliation was formed, giving expression to common social concerns. However, it was never a strong movement.<sup>26</sup>

Lex Miller, editor of *Open Windows* from 1932-5 and general secretary from 1935-7, while vigorously opposing capitalism and nationalism, could not reconcile Christianity and communism: 'As between the Church and Capitalism, so between the Church and Communism, there can be no truce at all, for the Church alone exists to declare that man's life is fraught with honourable and holy purpose - 'to glorify God and enjoy Him forever'.<sup>27</sup> This continued as a topic of discussion in the following decades, but was particularly controversial at this time because of the growing fear in society about communism, reflected in the banning of several university magazines.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Arch Smyth by Christine Berry, 5 May 1995. Notes in my possession.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Sam Leatham by Michael Bassett, 20 March 1977. Transcript in possession of Fay Hercock.

<sup>25</sup> H. Belshaw 'Economics and the Christian Ethic', *OW*, vol.3, no.2, May 1929, pp.3-4.

<sup>26</sup> A.J.S. Reid, 'Church and State in New Zealand, 1930-35: A Study of the Social Role and Influence of the Christian Church in an Age of Crisis', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1961, p.88.

<sup>27</sup> Lex Miller, 'Editorial', *OW*, vol.9, no.6, October 1935, p.4.

### 3. Pacifism

One issue that captured both the interest and action of some members, particularly those with socialist ideals, was pacifism. During the First World War the Labour Party had fought conscription, and was one of the groups responsible for the 1929 petition calling for an end to compulsory military training.<sup>28</sup> While some socialists rejected warfare because it reinforced capitalism and undermined the ideal of brotherhood, others refused to fight on humanitarian grounds. Ormond Burton put forward his views that war was unchristian.<sup>29</sup> Burton was much more successful in influencing the movement with his charisma and uncompromising attitude on this issue than he had been with his Christian socialism. Speaking at an SCM conference in 1922-3 at Solway, he condemned chaplains to the military and saw war as in direct opposition to the commands of Jesus.<sup>30</sup> The issue was particularly of interest in 1927 as Alun Richards, an Auckland divinity student and SCM member, lost his civil rights for ten years after refusing to take part in compulsory military training because of his pacifist beliefs.<sup>31</sup> Lex Miller and another divinity student joined him two years later also forfeiting their right to vote.

The Christian and war became the subject of much discussion and debate, and like many issues raised in the SCM was not one which could be solved while a respect for all opinions was to be maintained. The NZSCM did not claim, as a body, to be pacifist or adopt a policy of pacifism. In 1928 the editor of *Open Windows* declared that although both the magazine and the SCM supported pacifists in their decision, because of their support for freedom of thought, speech, interpretation and conscience, they did 'not stand for pacifism, nor...for any one position or interpretation as against another'.<sup>32</sup> This once again reinforced its role as an arena for discussion and education rather than a group supporting any particular cause or viewpoint, though its sympathies did appear to lie with the pacifists. The issue continued to be discussed after the war years, and when Burton was released from prison in 1944 after serving a two and a half year sentence for printing 'subversive' material, his first public speech was at an SCM meeting.<sup>33</sup>

### The Breakaway of the Evangelicals and the SCM Reaction

The 1920s, then, was an era in the movement where the contemporary world occupied the SCM's concerns. This was partly due to the influence of social gospel theology and the increasingly liberal or 'humanist' stance of prominent figures in the movement. Labelled 'humanism' by its critics, because of its heavy emphasis on the reason and experience of 'man', proponents of this form of liberalism rejected the validity of belief in a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Instead the Scriptures were

<sup>28</sup>Compulsory military training was abolished in 1930. Although this was an economy measure, the defence minister, J.C. Cobbe, commented, 'I cannot ignore the strong feeling in favour of world peace and opposition to militarism...' See *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (NZPD)*, 224 (1929), p.612.

<sup>29</sup> See Burton, *Against Conscription*, Auckland, c.1944, p.2.

<sup>30</sup>Burton, *Shall We Fight?*, Auckland, c.1923, p.22.

<sup>31</sup>David Grant, *Out in the Cold: Pacifists and Conscientious Objectors in New Zealand During World War Two*, Auckland, 1986, p.5.

<sup>32</sup>*OW*, vol.2, no.4, June 1928, p.2.

<sup>33</sup>Burton was also dismissed from the Methodist church in 1942 and was not re-admitted till 1955. This was on the grounds that he refused to abide by the church's manifesto which stated that Methodist pulpits should not be used to either encourage or discourage enlistment in the forces. See Ernest Crane, *I Can Do No Other: A Biography of Ormond Burton*, Auckland, 1986, pp.157-73.



viewed as being open to interpretation by different cultures at different times.<sup>34</sup> This was known as the 'higher critical view' of the Bible. This humanistic view also called into question the 'fundamentals' of the faith as liberals in Europe had done decades before. W.H.P. MacKenzie, general secretary of the movement in the mid 1920s, admitted freely to his disbelief in the virgin birth of Christ, the atonement and the physical resurrection.<sup>35</sup> When asked if there were any leaders in the WSCF who believed in the foundation truths of the Christian faith, Donald Grant replied half jokingly that there were 'one or two Russians and a few Germans'.<sup>36</sup> His belief in action far outweighed his focus on doctrine or piety. He commented in an article: 'Loyalty to Jesus Christ has nothing much to do with words, statements, creeds or confessions; but it has everything to do with our character, our spirit, our attitudes, our standards.'<sup>37</sup> The emphasis of humanism was on the individual's experience or interpretation of God and truth. Lel Sewell, the women's travelling secretary of the movement from 1923-30, stated: 'Our present responsibility is not so much to maintain but to *recreate* a profound spiritual truth in living terms...[my emphasis]'.<sup>38</sup> Truth was to be assessed and interpreted in the light of the contemporary world and according to living experience.

William Pettit, a prominent SCM member, opposed the increasing humanism amongst the leadership of the SCM in the 1920s on the grounds that the dominant voice of liberalism excluded the evangelical view of literal interpretation of the Bible. A commission inquiring about the personal religion of students, carried out in 1925 by the SCM, confirmed the fears of Pettit and his conservative supporters that the humanist leadership was ignoring or undermining the fundamentals of the faith. The commission revealed that most students did not understand the concept of Jesus as 'saviour' or the meaning of his atoning death for them as individuals. Pettit commented rather bitterly, 'Perhaps it might have been truer to state that a large number of those within the [m]ovement had no experience of Jesus Christ as Saviour and denied the necessity of the [a]tonement.'<sup>39</sup> Debate over the inclusion of fundamentalist or traditional literature at conferences amongst leaders further confirmed Pettit's fears. The majority held that 'fundamentalist' or 'traditional' Christian literature had a place in the movement because of its historic value, but was considered to have little relevance otherwise. Another difference of opinion lay in the understanding of missions. The emphasis in the movement was on the 'social gospel' in which the material conditions and physical needs of society were given priority alongside (or sometimes instead of) individual salvation, an approach Pettit argued was opposed to the 'Great Commission of Jesus'.

The visit of John R. Mott for a conference in 1926 was something of a watershed for the movement, as it was the point at which the SCM irrevocably divided into two camps. Quoting Henry Drummond's phrase, 'It is better to be active than to

<sup>34</sup>Steve Bruce, *Firm in the Faith*, Aldershot, 1984, pp.1-4.

<sup>35</sup>W.H. Pettit, 'Experiences in Christian Work Among New Zealand Students', in *NZ Varsity Papers No. 2: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (NZ), A Sketch of its Origins, Doctrine and Practice*, Wellington, c.1940, p.30.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>*OW*, vol.2, no.15, July 1928, p.2.

<sup>38</sup>*OW*, vol.3, no.4, July 1929, p.12.

<sup>39</sup>Pettit, 'Experiences in Christian Work', p.29.

be orthodox', Mott exhibited the liberal tendencies that fundamentalists rejected.<sup>40</sup> Pettit's own attempts to bring the movement back to its 'evangelical emphasis' of early days by personal visits to each of the branches had been unsuccessful and Mott, while sympathising with Pettit, did not offer the challenge that Pettit had hoped for.<sup>41</sup>

After the conference Pettit returned to Auckland, and in August 1927 formally organised an evangelical group which called itself the Auckland University College Student Bible League.<sup>42</sup> This was supported with the formation of a similar group in Otago the following year. These conservative Bible study groups remained informal and isolated until the visit of Dr Howard Guinness in 1930, representing the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (IVFEU). The IVFEU was formed in 1927 by conservative Christians in reaction to the increasing liberalism of the SCM in Britain.<sup>43</sup> Guinness visited New Zealand after the invitation of Cree Brown who heard 'accidentally' about the IVFEU. He established branches, eventually affiliated to the main body in 1936.<sup>44</sup>

Most of the members of the IVFEU belonged to large evangelical churches. They each had to sign a doctrinal statement stating a belief in the fundamentals of the faith and a belief in the literal interpretation of the Bible, while also signing a card confirming that Jesus Christ was their personal Saviour. This contrasted with the SCM which had open membership as its basis. SCM students agreed that the division between the two groups was a negative and unnecessary thing. There was also however a strong feeling emerging that perhaps the EU was not 'misguided' but had made some valid criticisms of the movement. Interestingly this event had many parallels with movement in Britain. In 1910 an evangelical group in Cambridge, England, had severed their ties with the movement, following years of discussion over the necessity of having a doctrinal statement of belief for membership.<sup>45</sup> The group at Cambridge opposed the liberal direction the movement appeared to be taking, and believed that their only choice was to formally separate from the SCM.

When Pettit observed that many SCM members in the 1920s did not believe in the necessity of atonement, he identified a wider trend evident in the movement: a broadening in belief and a general rejection of dogma. On the front page of a 1931 edition of *Open Windows* was a phrase which illustrated this desire by some to break away from old ways and ideas. It commented on the common reaction of many to trample anything which challenged tradition: 'There is a tendency to regard new ideas as unpleasant draughts likely to disturb our normal habits of life and our comfort, and

<sup>40</sup>'Editorial', *News Sheet*, no.3, June 1926, p.6, HL. Another member also noted this aspect of Mott's talk. See *News Sheet*, p.13.

<sup>41</sup>Pettit, 'Experiences in Christian Work', p.30.

<sup>42</sup>Peter J. Lineham, 'Evangelical Youth Movements in New Zealand' in W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *Voluntary Religion: Papers Read at the 1985 Summer Meeting and the 1986 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, 1986, Oxford, p.484.

<sup>43</sup>Peter Lineham, 'William Hadlow Pettit (1885-1985): Background Paper in Preparation for Entry in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol.3', unpublished paper, Palmerston North, c.1994, p.12. In possession of Peter Lineham, Massey University, Palmerston North.

<sup>44</sup>The Auckland group changed its name to the Evangelical Students Fellowship. An Evangelical Union (EU) appeared in Otago and a group at Christchurch University College also formed. Guinness set up the Crusader Movement in secondary schools, which became very influential. See Lineham, 'Evangelical Youth Movements in New Zealand', p.485.

<sup>45</sup>See Tislington Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, 1933.

to dash to the window, as it were, and shut it.<sup>46</sup> James Bertram and Jack Bennett, editors of *Open Windows* in the early 1930s, challenged this attitude, particularly with regards to puritanical morality. They were part of a group which included some notable literary figures such as Bob Lowry, Allen Curnow and Blackwood Paul, all with tentative links with the SCM and all involved in the production of *Phoenix*, a literary magazine produced in 1932. They rebelled against the culture and religion of what they saw as a bygone era demonstrated in an attack by Bertram in one issue of *Open Windows* on the puritanical view of sex which the nineteenth century represented. In the article he stated that 'sex is still shamebound, driven to the privy, the smoking room and the rubber-goods shop; and it rarely becomes the glad and beautiful thing it ought to be....The worst of it is, that no amount of hysterical reproach or febrile intransigence will give it back to us.'<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, in a much better known incident, an issue of *Phoenix* was also banned for a sexually explicit article written by Bertram.<sup>48</sup>

Some critics felt that the movement was succumbing to a 'quasi-religious philosophy' altogether. A page in *Open Windows* was dedicated to reflections about God. In the poems and devotions God was equated with beauty, mercy, sanity and sunsets, among other things.<sup>49</sup> The Matrayana Upanishad was quoted in one particular magazine: 'He who is in the Fire and He who is in the Heart, and He who is in the Sun, are all One and the Same; and he who knows this becomes one with the One.'<sup>50</sup> This illustrated the openness of the movement to a variety of philosophies. One member wrote in 1929:

I did not come to know God because I saw and appreciated the beauty and poetry of trees and rivers, of sunset[s] and of mountains. I did not even come to know Him *primarily* because of the wonder of human personality and friendship....Least of all is it philosophy which makes us religious. The central thing...is simply our contact with Jesus Christ, and the fellowship with God....We must remember that Christ is the centre, and that other things are only incidental, however beautiful and fine they may be and are.<sup>51</sup>

Both members and leadership began to recognise the need to establish what the movement's function was, and what, if any, were the principles of its faith.<sup>52</sup>

The movement's ideal of inclusivity and its acceptance of anyway who considered themselves a 'seeker' was both the SCM's strength and its weakness. The movement was open to all students, but because of this was easily swayed due to its lack of a fixed doctrinal reference point. One writer commented in 1929, '[The SCM]

<sup>46</sup>'Editorial', *OW*, vol.5, no.1, March 1931, p.1.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid*, p.12.

<sup>48</sup>Bertram went on to become the editor of *Phoenix* after he resigned from his position as editor of *Open Windows*. *Phoenix* was a literary magazine that emerged in 1932 and in quality and quantity was one of the more successful literary magazines that came out of the universities in this period. See Rachel Barrowman, *A Popular Vision: The Arts and the Left in New Zealand, 1930-1950*, Wellington, 1991, p.2.

<sup>49</sup>*OW*, vol.5, no.1, March 1931, p.11.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>51</sup>*OW*, vol.3, no.4, July 1929, pp.12-13.

<sup>52</sup>Minutes of the NZSCM General Committee, Wellington, 29 August 1933, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:98, ATL.



seem[s] to have acquired breadth of outlook at the expense of depth and dynamic.<sup>53</sup> Members joined for any number of reasons and held a wide variety of beliefs. Some of those involved held more traditional beliefs, influenced by their churches or denominational Bible Classes. Lawrence Holt, later a lecturer in economics at Auckland University College, was involved in his student years (the mid 1920s) in both Bible Class and Student Christian Movement activities, as many students were at this time.<sup>54</sup> Jean Archibald, headquarters secretary in the period 1932-4, acknowledged a supernatural element in her faith.

In the night I had a most peculiar experience. I woke up quite suddenly and felt as if I was right in the presence of God. This is quite true. I felt terribly awed and rather frightened as if I wanted to get away. It was as if I'd had a very vivid dream which woke me up. I wonder what it meant. In the morning I didn't feel afraid, but much as I usually feel to death. I wonder if it was the mystical experience I've been praying for.<sup>55</sup>

Her prayer life and a strongly spiritual component were a vital part of her Christianity. Her experience of God was as much a supernatural event as an intellectual understanding. There were members whose faith was 'less developed', or who joined for reasons other than the religious aspect of the movement, particularly after the first world war.<sup>56</sup> Lindesay Mathews, who described herself as 'a complete agnostic', attended a May camp in Auckland with her friend Betty Holt, and then joined the movement. She stated in retrospect: 'I think [it was] more for the company than that I was in any way religious at that time. But I always believed in the ethic of it. It was just that I didn't believe in the supernatural part.'<sup>57</sup> Others took part because of the social and cultural activities.

The problem of defining Christianity was considered common enough to have a regular section devoted to its discussion in *Open Windows* entitled 'The Real Problem'. The 1928-9 summer conference in Cambridge took this as its theme, with its aim to discuss life and search for 'truth and reality'.<sup>58</sup> Some members subscribed to fairly traditional views of salvation while other members felt the answer to be far less clear cut or regimented.

It was agreed that the SCM's function in the university was primarily evangelism, but the nature of this evangelism was what remained questionable. Common concerns were expressed in the letters page about the SCM's function, with one writer suggesting that the SCM was 'perilously near being unevangelical'.<sup>59</sup> Alan Brash, later chairman of the National Council of Churches, commented that camps, retreats, and second-hand book stalls were fine but irrelevant if the task of evangelism

<sup>53</sup> W.M., 'Letter to the Editor', *OW*, vol.3, no.3, June 1929, p.13.

<sup>54</sup> Lawrence Holt to his sister (Dorothy) and his mother, 27 October 1925, L.W. Holt Papers, MS 1318, 85/105, Auckland Institute and Museum Library (AIM), Auckland.

<sup>55</sup> Diary of Jean Archibald, 20 February 1932. In possession of Barbara Holt.

<sup>56</sup> Lindesay Mathews quoted in Hercock, 'We Had These Ideals', p.13.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Lindesay Mathews by Fay Hercock, 7 April 1986. Transcript in possession of Fay Hercock.

<sup>58</sup> *OW*, vol.3, no.1, April 1929, p.9.

<sup>59</sup> D.M.H., 'Letter to the Editor', *OW*, vol.3, no.4, July 1929, p.14.

was not being carried out.<sup>60</sup> His memories of being a student in the SCM in the 1930s were of good social events rather than evangelism:

I must confess that in my own four years of New Zealand SCM membership within a university, I was not conscious of any such high calling as I have felt elsewhere in SCM. We were not a small minority engaged in a perilous undertaking. I was never called, as an SCM member, to anything more adventurous than playing a minor part in the running of an SCM social gathering, collecting the money at an SCM secondhand bookstall, and setting the pace at an SCM hike.<sup>61</sup>

However, many of these concerns and issues were put on the back burner with the onslaught of the depression of the 1930s.

### The SCM Response to the Depression of the 1930s

The depression of the early 1930s heightened the movement's problems of instability. With the 1932 riots in the four main centres of New Zealand, caused by the high level of unemployment, ministers began to realise that they could not remain out of politics or economics when poverty was no longer confined to those traditionally at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Jean Archibald, headquarters secretary at the time was shocked into considering the dire conditions of the Depression after receiving a newspaper article from her father about the Auckland riots.<sup>62</sup> By October 1933 over 80 000 were unemployed, around 12 per cent of the work force.<sup>63</sup> Discussions of economic solutions to society's problems became more common and there was heightened interest in monetary reform resulting in idealistic plans for a new society.

The SCM was some way ahead of the churches in its discussions of Christianity and the economic order. The Depression fuelled the debate on the appropriateness of solving society's economic problems with Christian ethics. However, it was an intellectual group of economists doing most of the arguing. A.G.B. Fisher wrote an article entitled 'Economic Ideals', in which he commented that there was more to bringing about change in the structure of society than 'warm hearts'.<sup>64</sup> The economist, Fisher observed, tended to be 'reluctant to admit into his scientific study explicit references to moral or religious considerations, because experience shows that of many who emphasise these most are unwilling to undertake the strenuous labour of systematic thought which is essential if urgent problems are to be solved'.<sup>65</sup> Lex Miller, a renowned Christian socialist, wrote a detailed article for *Open Windows* entitled 'Research on Unemployment: A Suggestion'. He agreed that the social work of the SCM should not be just about short term measures such as running soup kitchens or prison visiting. He saw the solution as gaining understanding

<sup>60</sup> Alan Anderson Brash, 'The SCM, the Church, and the Churches in New Zealand', an address to the general committee of the NZSCM, Wellington, 2 September 1949, p.3, HL.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Archibald commented, 'Terrible riots in A[uc]k[land]. People seem to have gone mad.' See Diary of Jean Archibald, 19 April 1932. In possession of Barbara Holt.

<sup>63</sup> Erik Olssen, 'Depression and War, 1931-1949', in Keith Sinclair (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, Auckland, 1990, p.211.

<sup>64</sup> A.G.B. Fisher, 'Economic Ideals', *OW*, vol. 3, no.4, July 1929, p.5.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

of the economic problems of society through detailed research, something he felt the SCM should be responsible for initiating. He suggested that the SCM also needed to provide intellectual leadership to the community. Sam Leathem, another economist and SCM member argued that this was not the task of the SCM, but should be carried out by the Economic Society.<sup>66</sup> The debate had begun in 1929 and continued in articles and the letters column throughout the years of the Depression. It was another two years before discussions such as this were being seriously carried out amongst church leaders in the various denominations.

Those involved in the debate did not negate the value of practical work. Both Alun Richards and Lex Miller, who pushed leftist theories, also received advice on practical Christianity from Colin Scrimgeour ('Uncle Scrim'), who in turn listened to their theories and ideas. Formerly a Methodist, Scrimgeour had left the church when it refused to buy into radio as a means of reaching people with the gospel. He set out alone and started his own radio show which he called 'The Radio Church of the Friendly Road' in which he stressed practical Christianity, the ideal of brotherhood and held out hope for the 'man in the street'.<sup>67</sup>

Practical involvement was carried out unofficially in all four of the main cities through existing 'missions' such as the Anglican Dock Street Mission in Auckland, with members providing a variety of services to the needy, from repairing shoes to dishing out meals.<sup>68</sup> Katherine Mays (nee Knight), a member at the Auckland branch of the SCM, was particularly involved in the practical side of things:

At university I fell in with the Student Christian Movement which was being stirred by the need for welfare programmes for the many unemployed during the Depression. We collected clothes from the more prosperous students and delivered them to homes in Freemans Bay - then thought of as Auckland's worst slums. I got to know several families, and later was allowed to take them the left-over food from the University cafeteria when it closed for the weekend. I spent one evening each week at the Dock St. Mission attached to St. Matthew's Church, cutting hair for queues of drab grey-faced people - mostly men - who came to see a Doctor, or get a sore dressed, or just a cup of cocoa at twopence per cup.<sup>69</sup>

Mays and some of her friends also helped out by collecting left over food from the university cafeteria on a Saturday and delivering it to the Mission.<sup>70</sup>

For most students in the movement, the Depression gave them the opportunity to extend their social theory into action rather than to engage in debates over politics or economics. For many it was this 'Christian' social aspect that was more influential than any form of political idealism or socialism. Sam Leathem and Lawrence Holt set up a 'Labour Club' at the University in 1934, though the ties with the Labour Party were not as strong as they may have appeared. Neither man voted Labour in 1935.<sup>71</sup> Some members were deeply affected by this increased interest in creating a new society through social reform. However, according to Betty Holt, a number who had

<sup>66</sup>OW, vol.5, no.6, September 1931, p.17.

<sup>67</sup>Allan Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1991, p.111.

<sup>68</sup>Interview with Sam Leathem.

<sup>69</sup>Katherine Knight, 'Friends Face Conflict: A Personal View', an address to the yearly meeting of the Society of Friends, 1980, n.p. Copy in possession of Fay Hercock.

<sup>70</sup>Locke, *Student at the Gates*, p.57.

<sup>71</sup>Hercock, 'We Had These Ideals', p.60.

been involved realised that their passion had been social or humanitarian rather than religious; many of Holt's circle of friends pursued other interests to the detriment of their faith later in life.<sup>72</sup>

In the years following the Depression the SCM faced difficulties defining its function. Debates over evangelism and the place of Bible study began to occupy the letters column of the movement's magazine and, with a lack of strong leadership in the first half of the decade, the direction of the movement (usually dictated by leadership) became ambiguous. The decisions made in the mid 1930s - to work closer with the churches and to closely focus on Bible study - aimed to alleviate some of these concerns, and also contributed to over two decades of relative stability within the SCM.

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<sup>72</sup>Interview with Betty Holt.



## 'Ut Omnes Unum Sint' 1935-1963

### A Change in Focus

In the early to mid 1930s the New Zealand SCM was marked by a new desire to work out the personal faith of students and carry out 'true evangelism in the college field'.<sup>1</sup> There was also increased discussion about the need for more Bible Study after a decade of relative disinterest, characteristic of the federation at the time. The general secretary of the WSCF, W.A. Visser 't Hooft, stated that the federation's decision to devote a whole issue of the *Student World* (the magazine of the WSCF) to the Bible was a 'sign of our times.' This was particularly evident in the decision to substitute the federation's annual summer conference for a Bible study conference in 1937, in which 'new life broke forth from the word.'<sup>2</sup>

Significant factors in the New Zealand movement contributed to this renewed biblical focus in the middle of the 1930s: the movement's concerns about its lack of identity and purpose, particularly after the formation of the Evangelical Unions; anxieties about the pronounced emphasis on social issues rather than biblical study by humanist leadership; the criticism of the movement by the churches; and the impact of neo-orthodox theology on some leading figures in the SCM.

From 1932-4 Jean Archibald carried out the tasks of both the general and headquarters secretaries, as no general secretary was appointed. While Archibald was forced to focus mainly on administration there was a noticeable increase in strict Bible study rather than the study of ethics or social issues. The books of the Bible became a central focus for some groups while others dedicated themselves to the study of a text called 'Christian Faith and Life', which examined the basics and fundamentals of the faith.<sup>3</sup> Social and international problems were rapidly becoming the domain of a small number of 'enthusiasts'.<sup>4</sup> While the beginnings of a renewed biblical focus can be traced in Archibald's period of leadership, it was under the charismatic leadership of Lex Miller in 1935 that the movement dramatically changed its focus.

### The Lex Miller Era

Lex Miller, editor of *Open Windows* from 1932-5 and general secretary of the SCM from 1935-7, was strongly influenced by neo-orthodox theology and encouraged a biblical focus in the movement. Karl Barth, a German theologian, was the best known figure in New Zealand associated with this new theology, which focused on 'the transcendence of God' and the centrality of the figure of Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> Overseas, Barthian theology had impacted on the churches, bringing liberalism back from its radical extremes to a new focus on God and the Bible. Miller saw it as a backlash to the social gospel. He stated:

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<sup>1</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1932-33, p.1, New Zealand Student Christian Movement (NZSCM) Papers, MS Papers 1617:464, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.

<sup>2</sup>Suzanne de Dietrich, *World Student Christian Federation: 50 years of history. 1895-1945*, Geneva, 1995, p.62.

<sup>3</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1933-34, p.1, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:464, ATL.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>J.T. Crozier, 'Makers of Modern Thought: Karl Barth', *Student*, no.5, July 1938, p.12.

There is a very vigorous movement in American theology...which is in debt to Barth and Brunner and is delivering a grand assault on 'liberal idealism', the overoptimistic view which thinks of the 'Kingdom of God' as being the new and harmonious society which men, by their humanitarian passion and consecrated effort are in the process of building.<sup>6</sup>

Under Miller's influence the Otago Christian Union study camp at Pounawea, attended by students from the university and teachers college, drew on Barth's *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, with topics addressed such as 'The Word', 'The Sacraments', 'The Ministry' and 'Reunion'. The 1935-6 NZSCM annual conference focused on similar topics.<sup>7</sup>

While the impact of Barthian theology on New Zealand Christianity has been questioned by historians, the influence of Miller and his ideas associated with neo-orthodox theology, quickly became apparent in the SCM. While debates over the place of the social gospel continued in the late 1930s,<sup>8</sup> by the 1940s it had lost most of its impetus within the movement.

Throughout this period both New Zealand and overseas speakers encouraged a strongly biblical focus, demonstrated in the movement's magazine; it contained 'Studies in Doctrine' and 'Studies in the Bible' as well as Bible basics for beginners. D.T. Niles, a visitor to New Zealand, was a young theologian influenced by Barthian thought, and impressed his beliefs on his listeners. Arthur Prior, a philosophy lecturer in the 1950s at Victoria University College, was also influenced by neo-orthodox theology and a disciple of Miller. Prior encouraged deep thought and philosophical discussion. A keen interest in 'biblical' theology was demonstrated in the study taken up by a number of non-divinity students at Wellington and Dunedin in 1943, all of whom achieved the Certificate of Proficiency in Religious Knowledge of the University of London.<sup>9</sup>

Miller was also instrumental in the decision making process of the mid 1930s, leading to the statement in 1935 by the NZSCM general committee that the movement should remain impartial towards contemporary public questions, and refrain from taking a stance on issues without the lead of the church. The following year the leadership of the SCM also decided that the movement should not take part in organised relief work, although individuals were encouraged to do so.<sup>10</sup> These decisions were essentially attempts to refocus the movement, and in many respects were successful. From the end of the 1930s until the end of the 1950s the movement was characterised by continuity and relative stability in its focus and activities, hence my focus on the period as a whole, rather than individual decades.

### The Relationship with the Churches: 1935-1963

The decision of 1935 guaranteed greater co-operation with the churches. As Jean Archibald had observed in 1934, the occasional clergy speaker at a Sunday tea

<sup>6</sup>Lex Miller, 'Una Sancta Ecclesia: Students Within the Universal Church', *Outlook*, 14 December 1936, p.6.

<sup>7</sup>*The New Zealand Student Christian Movement Handbook*, Wellington, 1968, p.3, SCM Otago District Council Records, 90-117:9, Hocken Library, Archives and Manuscripts (HL), Dunedin.

<sup>8</sup>*Student*, no.4, June 1951, p.29.

<sup>9</sup>Triennial Report of the NZSCM, 1941-3, p.1, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:464, ATL.

<sup>10</sup>Miller also wanted the movement to commit itself to a statement of faith or doctrinal basis for membership. This resulted in debates amongst the executive. The majority of leadership opposed Miller's view on the grounds that it would undermine the movement's commitment to openness.

was not indicative of general church support. In previous years criticism from the churches had become increasingly apparent. Some members of the denominational Bible Class movement opposed the liberal stance of the SCM,<sup>11</sup> and felt that members were being poached, adding to the churches' discontent with the SCM.<sup>12</sup> Chaplaincies, co-operation with the NCC and a commitment to ecumenism illustrated the movement's desire to draw nearer to the churches, rather than operating in isolation as they had been.

### I. Chaplaincies and Clerical leadership

If the movement in the previous decades was characterised by its number of pacifists, socialists and renowned academics, this period could best be described as the 'clergymen's period'. The SCM in this period helped produce many influential Presbyterian clergy, and was influenced by a number of charismatic clerical figures, such as Jack Bates. Bates played a big part in implementing neo-orthodox theology and educating members through his theological study books, used frequently at summer conferences and in study circles. He studied under Brunner in Switzerland in 1934-5, and his books explaining theology in lay terms were in heavy demand.<sup>13</sup> After engaging in a study on Romans written by Bates, one SCM member was surprised to find upon meeting him, 'not an inhabitant of some rarified theological stratum, but a man of great warmth, simplicity and understanding'.<sup>14</sup> Many of the study books produced for study camps, held in May of each year, were written by Bates. Denzil Brown, an SCM member in the late 1940s, declared that Bates' ideas were one of the key influences on his later ministry.<sup>15</sup> Archdeacon Young, known as Uncle Jim to SCM members, also had a profound impact. Young was renowned for his fly-fishing skills as well as his charismatic personality.<sup>16</sup> Ormond Burton and Alun Richards, both prominent clergymen who had been involved with the SCM in the 1920s and 1930s, occasionally addressed SCM Saturday evening meetings, in Wellington, in the 1940s.

A concern for greater links with the church was reflected in the institution of SCM Chaplains in the colleges. The first of these was Sam Woods appointed in 1937 to Canterbury University College; the last one was posted in Wellington in 1943.<sup>17</sup> Chaplaincies provided a link with the churches in the universities as well as bringing spiritual maturity and leadership to the SCM, particularly beneficial to a group that changed its members approximately every three years. Chaplaincy advisory boards were set up with representatives from the SCM and the various denominations, ensuring accountability to the churches as well as the movement. Chaplains varied from place to place. Some divided their time between the parish and the universities. In Auckland in the early 1950s Jack Lewis was a part time SCM chaplain at the

<sup>11</sup>M.N. Garing, "Four Square For Christ": The Presbyterian Bible Class Movement 1902-1972: Its Background, its Rise, its Influence and its Decline,' MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1985, p.118.

<sup>12</sup>Minutes of NZSCM General Committee Meeting, Feilding, 7 January 1934, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:98, ATL, Wellington.

<sup>13</sup>Ian Fraser, *Presbyterian Ministers 1840-1989*, Lower Hutt, 1990, p.52.

<sup>14</sup>Joan Anderson, 'J.M. Bates: in the Student Christian Movement', *Letters to J.M. Bates from friends and fellow workers: A tribute*, July 1978, p.42.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Denzil Brown by Christine Berry, 24 July 1995. In my possession.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Anon, 'The Movement and the Churches in New Zealand', n.d., (1945?), p.3. NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL, Wellington.



university and a lecturer at the Trinity Methodist College. Roy Clements remembered the impact Lewis had on him: 'Jack's profound scholarship, his openness to other traditions, his profound spirituality and above all his gentleness and love for us, brought to many of us some awareness of the best that Christianity had to give.'<sup>18</sup> The influence of chaplains in a practical way is perhaps best embodied in Martin Sullivan, chaplain to the SCM at Victoria University College in the late 1940s. Sullivan organised the 1947 and 1948 missions carried out by the university to Wanganui and Masterton, which involved visits to schools, involvement in services and rallies, and a rotary luncheon.<sup>19</sup> He was also instrumental in the establishment of Helen Lowry Hall in Karori, an SCM hostel for women, which was used occasionally for meetings.<sup>20</sup>

Divinity students contributed to the intense study programme and encouraged the discussion of current theological trends. Robert Thornley, general secretary at the end of the 1930s, and chaplain at Victoria University College in the 1940s, commented on the approach of SCM members to Bible study: 'We liked to think we that we were serious students, prepared to roll up our mental sleeves to tackle a subject in depth.'<sup>21</sup> Students quickly became familiar with names such as Barth, Brunner and Tillich. In the 1950s Bonhoeffer and 'demythologizing' occupied the interests of the more keen students.

## II. The SCM and the NCC

It is commonly noted by SCM members and other church figures that the SCM was a 'real stimulus to the ecumenical movement.'<sup>22</sup> When John R. Mott founded the WSCF he envisaged a union of Protestant denominations, exhibiting frustration about the lack of unity in the church, which was 'a result of denominational pride, jealousy and misunderstandings.'<sup>23</sup> Mott and Ruth Rouse both played a significant role in the ecumenical conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, the beginning of a series of international conferences which brought Protestant denominations together. At Amsterdam in 1939 the first world conference of Christian youth was held, including members from the federation, the YMCA and the YWCA.<sup>24</sup> In New Zealand in 1923 a conference for youth workers was held to bring about encouragement and co-operation. This formed itself into the Youth Council of the Council of Religious Education in 1930. A series of other conferences at a national and international level reflected rising interest in ecumenism and the growing realisation in church circles of the importance of lay young people in mission. Throughout the 1930s there was also wider consideration of the relationship of the movement to the churches.<sup>25</sup> Thornley commented that members in this period felt that they 'were sharing in the renewal of the world wide church'.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Roy Clements, 'Some Vague, Biased and Probably Faulty Memories of the SCM in Auckland - About 1953-6', notes, 1994, n.p. In my possession.

<sup>19</sup>*Student*, no. 1, March 1949, p.2.

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Norman Gilkison by Christine Berry, 28 July 1995. In my possession.

<sup>21</sup>Malcolm Johnston, notes, n.d. (c.1970s), n.p. TSCF Archives, Series N7, Wellington.

<sup>22</sup>Interview with Denzil Brown.

<sup>23</sup>J.R. Mott, *The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation*, London, 1900, p.

<sup>24</sup>de Dietrich, p.69.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid*, p.63.

<sup>26</sup>R. Thornley, notes, n.d. (c.1970s), n.p., OUSCM Records 90-138:23, HL.



The SCM's association with the churches was cemented with the establishment of the New Zealand National Council of Churches (NCC) in 1941, its purpose to unite Protestant churches of different denominations and provide a forum in which common problems could be solved.<sup>27</sup> In a report on the NCC conference on Christian Order held in Christchurch in 1945, it was estimated that around two thirds of the those who attended were past or present members of the SCM,<sup>28</sup> with similar numbers attending the Faith and Order conference of 1947. Several of the leading figures of the NCC, such as Archbishop West-Watson, Rev. H.W. Newell, Alan Brash (general secretary from 1947),<sup>29</sup> and Archdeacon Young had been involved in the SCM. The World Council of Churches (WCC) also contained many prominent federation figures, including Vissert Hooft, previously the WSCF general secretary, who took on the position of general secretary for the WCC after its formation in the 1940s.

The NCC was one of the most influential forces on the SCM in this period. The involvement of the two groups was so close that, in 1949, the secretary, Alan Brash, was prompted to point out their differences. He commented that the NCC was an official ecclesiastical organisation for the churches to do what they determined. Unlike the SCM, it was 'not a group of enthusiastic Christians united across denominational barriers for the purposes of encouraging Church unity and still less for any evangelistic task.'<sup>30</sup>

In the years following the war there was growing recognition in the NCC and the movement that overseas aid was important. Its focus on the wider world was renewed, particularly when the *Student and Church and Community* (the magazine of the National Council of Churches) partially joined from 1946-9. Groups such as World Student Relief (WSR), started in the war period to meet the physical needs of students, provided an opportunity for SCM members to support practical relief work.<sup>31</sup> (The WSR was established by the WSCF, the ISS and Pax Romana, and most of the federation's work was done through this body.)<sup>32</sup> Raising money for this organisation was frequently done through work days organised by the university which SCM members took part in. Work could include anything from painting or repairing fences to gardening.<sup>33</sup> The involvement with the WSR contributed to a growing awareness of ecumenism in the movement. A writer in *Student* commented that '[r]elief and self help, co-operating with other student bodies, has given the SCM new opportunities. ISS and WSR revealed great potentialities of solidarity and community spirit transcending group interests and national borders.'<sup>34</sup>

The WSR also made contributions to *Student*, ensuring members were made aware of the plight of refugees and the consequences of war on students in European countries. The involvement of one Jewish family in the movement, the Oestreicher's, brought the realities of the war to New Zealand members. Dr. Oestreicher's wife was

<sup>27</sup> Colin Brown, *Forty Years On: A History of the National Council of Churches in New Zealand 1941-1981*, Christchurch, 1981, p.1.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Sutton, 'Your Delegate Reports', 1945, n.p., photocopy of an article from *Student*. In possession of Joan Anderson.

<sup>29</sup> Alison O'Grady, *Alan Brash: Voice for Unity*, Auckland, 1991, p.54.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Anderson Brash, 'The SCM, the Church, and the Churches in New Zealand', an address to the general committee of the NZSCM, Wellington, 2 September 1949, p.4, HL.

<sup>31</sup> *Student*, no.2, November 1949, p.13.

<sup>32</sup> de Dietrich, p.73.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Lance Robinson by Christine Berry, 26 July 1995. In my possession.

<sup>34</sup> *Student*, no.2, September 1949, p.8.

an opera singer who had sung before Hitler, and his son Paul later went onto become a radical Anglican clergyman.<sup>35</sup>

This interest in the wider world was also encouraged over the next two decades by the WSCF. Federation days in which SCM members spoke on the WSCF in local churches, and the payment of WSCF fees from the yearly book sale proceeds ensured this strong link with the international body was maintained. The focus of the federation and the NCC gradually becoming centred on South East Asia. Student's horizons were being widened:

The WSCF was a distant but benevolent presence. Many of us subscribed to *Student World* which contained impressive essays of varying degrees of unreadability and the more popular Federation News which had lots of more immediately usable [sic] bits. Occasionally the General Secretary - Pat Morrison or Peter MacKenzie - would visit us to bring us up-to-date on the Federation thinking, and other people who had the money or the time to undertake the long sea journeys to Federation gatherings would tell of exciting Christian developments elsewhere. There were WSCF visitors...and names like Geneva and Bangalore became part of our consciousness. All this, together with a strong message coming from the National Council of Churches, started to persuade us, stranded as we were at the end of the earth, that we were part of the greater human scene and in particular part of South East Asia.<sup>36</sup>

Overseas visitors to the movement also encouraged this specifically Asian focus: C.F. Andrews from the Indian SCM visited in 1937; Surgit Singh in 1945; and Arun Sircar (also from India) in 1957. Kyaw Than, associate general secretary of the WSCF visited in 1954 and, like T.Z. Koo of the WSCF, encouraged students to consider Asian concerns.<sup>37</sup>

Norman Gilkison, the general secretary in 1949 was similarly credited with encouraging a wider outlook, having spent time overseas. It was claimed he had the 'gift of being able to share his experiences, both in writing and in conversation'. The SCM had struggled over the war period putting out only triennial reports. From 1941 until after the war had ended, there were no annual conferences, and the Pacific Area conference was cancelled. While the movement strengthened in the immediate years following the war, under the leadership of Jim Battersby, Gilkison was credited as the leader who brought 'new thrust and direction'.<sup>38</sup>

While the movement worked more closely with the churches, and particularly the NCC, the liberalism of the movement continued to alienate it from the more conservative mainstream churches. The NCC and the SCM held a series of combined conferences with students and teachers of the theological colleges, the first of these on evangelism at St. Saviours Children's Home in Christchurch in 1951.<sup>39</sup> Held biennially, these conferences only lasted in this form until 1957, by which time those attending had dropped by 30%. The idea was reviewed and it was decided that the SCM should withdraw and the NCC should continue holding them, as the general opinion of the

<sup>35</sup>Interview with Joan Anderson by Christine Berry, 4 May 1995. In my possession.

<sup>36</sup>Clements, 'Some Vague, Biased and Probably Faulty Memories of the SCM in Auckland', n.p.

<sup>37</sup>Anon, 'Overseas Visitors to the New Zealand Student Christian Movement', list, c.1950s, n.p., NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL.

<sup>38</sup>*Student*

<sup>39</sup>*Student*, no.6, August 1951, p.5.



NCC was that 'SCM was a brand name disliked by conservative evangelicals'.<sup>40</sup> Billy Graham's visit in 1959, once again raised the issue of the differences between the SCM and the NCC. Initially the movement's leadership was split in opinion on the stance that the movement should take with regard to Graham's visit. It was finally agreed that although he came as a representative of the church (invited by Alan Brash) and in this respect should be welcomed, the 'fundamentalism and the emotionalism associated with his method [would] be a stumbling block to many students'. Thus his outreach was not considered the best method of evangelism, but it was agreed that there was something to be learnt from his evangelistic spirit.<sup>41</sup> Paul Oestreicher, some years later, objected to Billy Graham 'not because of his methods but because he puts forward a deliberate and highly structured attempt to introduce religiosity as necessary for salvation'.<sup>42</sup> This conflicted with the movement's ideals of freedom and open-mindedness. The movement's leadership separated itself from the NCC on this issue, although they did not actively oppose it.

### III. Wider Ecumenism: Being an interdenominational movement

The focus on ecumenism, with the words of Christ 'Ut Omnes Unum Sint' ('that they all may be one') unofficially adopted as the catch phrase of the movement, had broad implications for the movement. The SCM's desire for ecumenism was reflected in the attempts to co-operate with the <sup>Evangelical</sup> Ecumenical Union (EU). It was felt by SCM leadership that the movement had returned to a biblical basis, discarding its more humanistic elements in favour of a renewed focus on the church community and the transcendence of God, and thus had enough common ground with the EU to warrant co-operation.<sup>43</sup> However the EU would only dialogue with the SCM if it adopted the same doctrinal base as them: an acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and recognition of the literal inspiration of the Scriptures.<sup>44</sup> The SCM was an inclusive movement; it was a place where 'convinced Christians, doubters and agnostics...[could] meet and join together in study, discussion and other activities'.<sup>45</sup> It did not feel it could commit itself to a central doctrine or creed for membership without being exclusive. Hence neither group could adopt the other's policy without compromising the beliefs of both.

While the EU claimed to bear no animosity or ill will toward the SCM, there was often tension on both sides.<sup>46</sup> John Deane, principal of the Bible Institute, went to talk to the EU and observed through conversation that 'they heartily despised the SCM, and from the little contact I had with SCM the hostility seemed to be

<sup>40</sup> Colin Brown, *Forty Years On: A History of the National Council of Churches in New Zealand, 1941-1981*, Christchurch, 1981, pp.110-11. Brown notes that while 50 students from 6 different colleges attended in 1951, only 35 attended in 1957.

<sup>41</sup> Minutes of the NZSCM General Committee, Wellington, 29 August 1958, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:103, ATL.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Powell, 'Paul Oestreicher, A Reaction', NZSCM District Council Newsletter, May 1969, p.3. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>43</sup> Jean Archibald, 'A General Impression of the Movement as Seen from Headquarters, 1934', TS, p.2, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL.

<sup>44</sup> Cree Brown noted that the executive were largely opposed to restoring this doctrinal basis. See Mr. Cree Brown to Dr. H. Guinness, 29 March 1930, TSCF Archives, Series A2c, Wellington. Cree Brown noted that the executive were largely opposed to restoring this doctrinal basis.

<sup>45</sup> Joyce Pegler, Cyclostyled letter to new students of AUSCM, 28 February 1955. Copy in possession of Joyce Fairgray.

<sup>46</sup> John Deane to Mr. T. C. Cocker, 19 March 1947, TSCF Archives, Series A3c, Wellington.



reciprocated.<sup>47</sup> Jim Bates argued that the two were fundamentally the same, and that ignoring this was denying the idea of unity and brotherhood, important to the SCM as it emphasised ecumenism.<sup>48</sup> He stated: 'To all Christians in the University who take their position seriously it is unsatisfactory that there should be two groups each of which claim to represent the Christian faith to students...it is sinful...something must be done to overcome this calamity.'<sup>49</sup> Graeme Ferguson, a member at Auckland University College in the early 1950s, recalled the division: 'There were horror stories around about the EU and regularly we received refugees from their narrow biblicism - The President of the SCM was not amused when [h]e/she found themselves the named subject of fervent prayer for their conversion to the faith.'<sup>50</sup> Invitations to attend conferences by the SCM were politely but firmly declined by the EU, who asked that out of its 'Christian charity' the movement would cease making these requests.<sup>51</sup>

Another area that was of great concern to the SCM in New Zealand and the wider federation was Communion. This was not a new concern but one which took on acute relevance in this period with the movement's stress on unity. Debates on inter-Communion at conferences filled *Student*. Students felt that they should be able to share in Communion as a body, regardless of their denomination. The Anglican Church could not allow this for doctrinal reasons and throughout the period had to partake in a separate ceremony. In 1928 Archbishop West Watson conducted an open Communion service at an SCM Conference at Waitaki, and Bishop Holland followed his lead at Chilton St. James in 1942.<sup>52</sup> However, these were not condoned by the Anglican church. While theological arguments about the doctrine underlying it went on amongst leadership, the 'divided table' was a source of grief for many students.

The social aspect or 'fellowship' was increasingly seen as important if true ecumenism was to become a reality. Conferences and camps continued to be highlights of the SCM's programme. Tramping and hitchhiking expeditions after the annual conferences to places such as the Southern Alps gave students the opportunity to relate on an informal level.<sup>53</sup> The formation of relationships within the movement was inevitable. Known by some as the 'Society of Courtship and Marriage' or the 'Society of Christian Marriages', the movement was a reputable meeting place for young Christians. One church-going student was instructed by his mother not to join the SCM because she believed it was nothing more than a marriage club.<sup>54</sup> Indeed many people did meet their future partner in the movement, an inevitable consequence of the mixing of like-minded people.

The ecumenical movement was a Protestant movement. While some SCM leaders were open to Catholicism in the early 1930s,<sup>55</sup> members were generally Protestants in the decades that followed. The Catholic society in the university and the

<sup>47</sup>Deane to Cocker, 4 March 1946, TSCF Archives, Series A3c, Wellington.

<sup>48</sup>See J.M. Bates, *Ut Omnes Unum Sint*, Lower Hutt, 1946.

<sup>49</sup>J.M Bates, 'Memorandum on the Relationship of the SCM to the EU', c.1945, n.p., NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:632, ATL.

<sup>50</sup>Graeme Ferguson to Christine Berry, 19 January 1996. In my possession.

<sup>51</sup>Interview with Lance Robinson.

<sup>52</sup>SCM and Joint Communion Services', n.d., p.1, MS Papers 1617:177, ATL.

<sup>53</sup>Clements, 'Some Vague, Biased and Probably Faulty Memories of the SCM in Auckland', n.p.

<sup>54</sup>Interview with Joan Anderson.

<sup>55</sup>Cree Brown to Guinness, 29 March 1930, TSCF Archives, Series A2c, Wellington.

SCM operated in isolation from one another and, according to the general secretary in the late 1940s, the 'barrier [separating them] was very great'.<sup>56</sup> While there were friendships between Catholics and SCM members, the general suspicion of Roman Catholicism remained throughout the period. Its eventual breakdown was aided by changes made in the Catholic church after the Second Vatican Council of Rome, leading to increased co-operation in the late 1960s.

### The Student and the University

From 1936 the movement confined itself more narrowly to working within the university rather than society as a whole, rejecting social and political action. The contemporary world and the issues it raised for Christianity were still considered very important. 'Christianity and Politics', 'Christianity and Economics', 'Christianity and Psychology' were frequent topics addressed in study circles and *Student* as the had been in the 1920s and 1930s. However political and social problems, particularly in a New Zealand context were overlooked, or relegated to 'Caleb's Column' (later 'Wiremu'), while ecumenical concerns and Bible study dominated.

### I. The University as the Mission Field

The decision of the movement to rename its magazine *Student* was an indication that the SCM had moved its primary focus away from the world glimpsed through *Open Windows*, to the more defined community of the university. As Malcolm Johnston observed 'It was important to be a Christian in the world - and our world was the University.'<sup>57</sup> A concern with the nature of the 'Christian Presence' in the university was not confined to New Zealand. Alexander (Lex) Miller, a prominent leader of the NZSCM in the early 1930s and editor of *Open Windows* from 1932, later commented on the problems associated with voluntary and unofficial Christian groups on the American Campus. He could have well been describing the NZSCM in the 1940s or 1950s:

[They] frequently operate without any well-wrought-out theology of their function, still less any precise notion of the relation of their inherited function to the total enterprise of the University. There is therefore a vast wastage of well intentioned effort, a good deal of irritation on both sides, and presently a somewhat feverish self scrutiny on the part of the Christian agencies themselves.<sup>58</sup>

The *Student World*, magazine of the WSCF, also ran articles on the subject, sometimes reprinted in the NZSCM's magazine.

'Missions' were practical attempts to at least partially meet the university's perceived needs and allow the SCM to 'evangelise', alleviating some of the on-going concern about the function of the SCM. Throughout the period there was discussion at meetings about the need to rekindle the movement's 'evangelistic zeal'.<sup>59</sup> The visit of C.F. Andrews from the Indian SCM in 1936 was the first national mission to the universities of New Zealand. In 1951 a second national mission was held, with Canon

<sup>56</sup>Interview with Norman Gikison.

<sup>57</sup>Malcolm Johnston, n.d. (c.1970), n.p., TSCF Archives, series N7/37, Wellington.

<sup>58</sup>Alexander Miller, *Faith and Learning, Christian Faith and Higher Education in Twentieth Century America*, Connecticut, 1977, p.145.

<sup>59</sup>Minutes of the NZSCM general committee, December 1950, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:102, ATL.

Bryan Green as the speaker. For Victoria University College students this particular mission was memorable because of the co-operation of the EU and the SCM. The preparatory work for the mission was carried out by a committee of 2 members of the EU and 2 representatives from the SCM. Regular prayer meetings were held and attended by both groups.<sup>60</sup> At the 1956 mission a team of prominent SCM figures carried out a series of addresses. Albert Moore, Norman Gilkison, James Matheson were speakers for the South Island, while Alan Gray, Eric Gowing and Joan Cochran visited branches in the North Island.<sup>61</sup> The 1956 mission incorporated theological and Bible-based talks in lunch-times, while in the evenings more practical and social issues were examined; these included 'International Relations', 'The Opposite Sex', and 'Psychology and Religion' among others. The inclusion of a talk by Joan Cochran, author of *Meeting and Mating*, demonstrated a growing interest in sexuality and in the issues that were facing young people.

While the influence of these missions cannot be measured, they do reflect a desire on the part of SCM members to make an impact on their fellow students and 'evangelise'. However later on disagreement over the nature of evangelism led to the abandonment of the word 'mission'.<sup>62</sup>

## II. Non-University Youth

While the movement was primarily focused on the university, it also had branches for young people in the teachers' colleges and schools, and also those who had recently graduated, with staff catering for each of their needs. The teachers' colleges, which had seceded from the universities in 1923,<sup>63</sup> were not particularly successful due to the high turnover of students. The auxiliary (or senior group) continued to be active although it had been at its strongest in the early 1930s. The non-university division with the greatest impact on young people was the school's movement.

The school's division operated largely in isolation from the university groups and focused mainly on the sixth form. It had its own constitution, magazine and programme. Each year began with a broadcast talk in schools by a prominent SCM member. Its aim was to train students in the Christian faith rather than to stress evangelism. The leadership believed that if a school pupil was to become a follower of Christ, 'missionary zeal w[ould] naturally follow'.<sup>64</sup> A lack of male leadership due to the war meant that the school's division was largely focused on the girl's schools. In the 1940s there were nineteen schools groups throughout the country examining the Bible and its application to their lives.<sup>65</sup> Pat Morrison was appointed schools secretary in 1953 after a long break without a school's staff member. Nancy Bell (later the WSCF secretary of the schools movement) contributed to the strengthening of the movement from 1959; when Frances Cotton took up the position in 1961 there were 35 schools' branches in operation.

<sup>60</sup> W. Gardiner Scott, 'Meet Bryan Green', *Student*, no.6, August 1951, pp.14-16.

<sup>61</sup> Anon, untitled pamphlet, 1956, n.p., NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:529, ATL.

<sup>62</sup> Anon, untitled notes, n.d., n.p., NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL.

<sup>63</sup> Anon, untitled notes, n.d., n.p., NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL.

<sup>64</sup> 'New Zealand Student Christian Movement', booklet, December 1946, p.4, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL.

<sup>65</sup> 'NZSCM', booklet, December 1946, p.1, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:4, ATL.



### III. A Neglect of Social Issues?

The decision of 1936 in which communal relief or social work was rejected, and a move away from the 'social gospel', contributed to external and internal criticism of the SCM for its apparent lack of social or political concern. Ironically, twenty years before, the SCM was criticised for its overactive social involvement and lack of solid theological study.

The older members of our SCM often tell us that before the last war the SCM was deeply concerned about social and political events and eager to do something about them. They knew their newspapers and neglected their Bibles...they had cause to regret it. It is partly as a result of their influence, but by no means wholly, that today we are experiencing a reaction.<sup>66</sup>

Paul Oestreicher commented that contemporary SCM members held onto the Bible but not the newspaper, and were rapidly losing sight of their dual duties. Ian Dixon, another member in the fifties made a similar observation in retrospect: 'The SCM...was non political in the extreme - we were close to the Church and spent long hours on our knees.'<sup>67</sup>

Some branch initiated projects happened on occasion, but these were generally short term ventures organised by students themselves. Joan Anderson recalled a brief flirtation with social work in Dunedin in the 1940s, with attempts to run a youth programme; it turned into a riotous affair as far more youth turned up than were expected, eventuating in a police visit and the mistaken arrest of some SCM members.<sup>68</sup> In the 1950s 'work camps' were organised by some student members in holiday times, such as those held at the St. James Church Buildings in Wellington in 1952 and 1953.<sup>69</sup> These involved communal living for a short period of time while students carried out labour, worked in hospitals, or helped in some other way in the community. Denzil Brown remembered one particular camp held in Dunedin where a members helped build a country church out of mud bricks.<sup>70</sup>

A few individuals were involved in politics. Lance Robinson, a member at Victoria in the late 1940s and early 1950s, recalled distributing illegal printed material from the Waterside Worker's Union after the waterfront strike of 1951. Other SCM members were also involved; some distributed information while others helped run food banks to support the workers.<sup>71</sup>

The social and political concerns of a few members was not reflected in the movement as a body; the SCM did not regard this sort of work as its primary function. The lack of social and political concern at a communal level was perhaps most obvious in the neglect of discussion about racial conflict in a New Zealand context. Like most New Zealander's SCM members overlooked the problems on their own doorstep. In 1953 Joan Metge commented in *Student* on the need for cultural sensitivity when presenting the gospel to Maori. She stated: 'We must not force our way of life upon the Maori when we offer them our religion...but must present the Gospel as a living

<sup>66</sup>*Student*, no.1, March 1954, p.24.

<sup>67</sup>Ian Dixon cited in 'The SCM Looks at itself', *Outlook*, 24 October, 1970, p.6.

<sup>68</sup>Interview with Joan Anderson.

<sup>69</sup>Anon, notes, c.1950s, n.p., NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:529, ATL.

<sup>70</sup>Interview with Denzil Brown.

<sup>71</sup>Interview with Lance Robinson.

reality in terms of their own culture.<sup>72</sup> There was widening realisation that Christianity embodied much of Pakeha culture, necessitating deeper thought about evangelisation of Maori. Metge also showed a growing awareness of the problems that faced Maori in New Zealand, both in terms of welfare and relations with Pakeha. However Metge was exceptional in this particular interest. While issues of *Student* in 1952 and 1953 examined 'Race' and 'Maori and Pakeha Problems', there was little awareness of racial tension amongst members generally.<sup>73</sup> While there was some involvement in the 'No Maoris, No Tour' protests in the late 1950s it was until the late 1960s that this became a very real issue for the movement.

### **The Establishment of Permanent Institutions**

From the middle of the 1930s until the early 1960s the movement was university focused and strongly linked with the churches. The period was characterised by stability, reflected in attempts to establish permanence through the purchase of buildings. The SCM invested in two new buildings in Wellington; a hostel for men in Ngaio and Helen Lowry Hall, the women's hostel.<sup>74</sup> In 1954 the rotary donated a fully furnished cabin to the Wellington branch of the SCM and a house was purchased in Nairn Street for the general secretary.<sup>75</sup> The successful and renowned theological book room, situated next to the national headquarters in Wellington, continued to supplement the finances of the movement. Over this period there was also continual discussion about the necessity of purchasing a permanent campsite for conferences, although this never eventuated. The stability and continuity throughout the period helped create a strong body in which people could 'grow up as Christians'.<sup>76</sup> The movement was setting down roots; in the period that followed these roots were ripped out as the SCM faced new challenges from society, the church and the university.

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<sup>72</sup>*Student*, no. 1, March 1953, p. 27.

<sup>73</sup>By examining studies and addresses it becomes apparent that this is an example of an issue that the editors felt should be investigated, but ended out as a form of tokenism.

<sup>74</sup>NZSCM Annual Report 1953-4, p. 2, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:465, ATL.

<sup>75</sup>NZSCM Annual Report 1954-5, p. 11, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:465, ATL.

<sup>76</sup>Interview with Norman Gilkison.

## 'Alert to the Needs of the World' 1963-1996

### The 1960s: the secularisation of society

In the 1960s the SCM struggled to define itself, its task and its understanding of the world, as the institutions, authorities and concepts of Christianity were challenged. Young people had begun to rebel against the family and community focus of the previous generations and embrace new attitudes towards sexuality, freedom and morality. Television and sophisticated communication networks revolutionised knowledge and brought the wider world to New Zealand, impacting on traditional perceptions of Christianity as well as society.<sup>1</sup> For many young people the institutional church 'had kept this new world hidden, and when it did emerge, condemned both the new world and the young who had discovered it.'<sup>2</sup> Thus they rejected the values and limits of the churches, as part of a general move away from institutionalised religion. Fewer people associated themselves with any one denomination. There was an increase in the number of people stating they had no religious affiliation.<sup>3</sup> Religion was becoming pluralistic, with a widening range of beliefs and religious labels emerging: from the Charismatic movement and Pentecostalism to liberal humanism. Secularisation, defined by Bryan Wilson as 'the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance', accelerated in the 1960s.<sup>4</sup>

While the previous generations of SCM members had indulged primarily in 'biblical' or existentialist theology (Paul Tillich was a popular choice), students of the 1960s turned to this 'religionless' or secular theology.<sup>5</sup> Theologians such as John T. Robinson, Harvey Cox and Paul Van Buren, challenged the institutions, precepts, concepts and terms associated with traditional Christianity.<sup>6</sup> 'I am convinced', stated Robinson (the writer of *Honest to God*), 'that there is a growing gulf between the traditional orthodox supernaturalism in which our faith has been framed and the categories which the "lay" world...finds meaningful today.'<sup>7</sup> The interest in this theology and the ideas underlying it was evident in SCM study groups, which moved their focus from books of the Bible and neo-orthodox theology onto texts such as *The Secular City*.<sup>8</sup> Some of the leaders of the SCM made an active contribution to the

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<sup>1</sup>Allan K. Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1991, p.169.

<sup>2</sup>James Veitch, 'Christianity: Protestants Since the 1960s', in Peter Donovan (ed.), *Religions of New Zealanders*, Palmerston North, 1990, p.89.

<sup>3</sup>Lloyd Geering stated that 5.4% of the population of New Zealand claimed to have no religion in 1926. In 1981 the same claim was made by 23.6% of the population. See Geering, 'Pluralism and the Future of Religion in New Zealand', in Colless and Donovan (eds.), *Religion in New Zealand Society*, 2nd ed., Palmerston North, 1985.

<sup>4</sup>Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society*, London, 1966, p.14.

<sup>5</sup>The NZSCM: A Report for the Year 1963', p.1, Otago University Student Christian Movement (OUSCM) District Council Records, 90-117, Hocken Library Archives and Manuscripts (HL), Dunedin.

<sup>6</sup>See J.T. Robinson, *Honest to God*, London, 1963. See also Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularisation and Urbanisation in Theological Perspective*, London, 1966, and Paul M. Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, Based on an Analysis of Language*, New York, 1963.

<sup>7</sup>Robinson, *Honest to God*, pp.7-8.

<sup>8</sup>The annual reports from 1963-7 show that study groups in the branches were regularly studying Cox's text.



*Honest to God* debate through a published booklet, entitled *Is the Shouting Over?*, which outlined a number of differing views.<sup>9</sup>

In 1967 Lloyd Geering, a former SCM member and renowned clergyman, was accused of heresy by two prominent Presbyterians. He was charged with 'attacking' the fundamentals of the faith, with the trial centring on his open denial of Christ's physical resurrection.<sup>10</sup> While the Presbyterian and Anglican churches were both divided in opinion over the Geering trial, the SCM was scarcely moved to discussion. Geering's statements were neither controversial nor new to a movement which had been discussing issues such as this for decades, particularly as the SCM was familiar with the secular theology coming from overseas. According to the general secretary at the time, Roy Clements, 'the [only] reaction of many SCM members was a rather amused bewilderment at this sudden resurgence of the Middle Ages'.<sup>11</sup>

The impact of secularisation was not just seen in the material studied by the SCM. It affected the way students perceived the world, and how they viewed the function of the SCM. Clements viewed the changes wrought by secularisation and secular theology on the movement optimistically, noting the prevalence of 'a great interest in religious investigation and a healthy openness about it'.<sup>12</sup> But secularisation was to have effects on the movement that Clements did not envisage. It marginalised some of those who had subscribed to more traditional concepts of God and Christianity while maintaining some liberal beliefs. The radical position of the leadership in the support of 'death of God' theology was not always reflective of the beliefs of members, causing some to rethink their place in the movement.<sup>13</sup> The secularisation of society and theology also brought into question the purpose of the SCM as a Christian group, particularly as the terms and precepts of traditional Christianity were brought into question.

### **A Changing Movement : the early 1960s**

A series of other factors also influenced the direction the SCM took in this decade, and its struggle to maintain a distinct identity. From the early 1960s the chaplaincy system was taken from the control of the SCM by the NCC. (Some denominations also appointed their own chaplains within the university.) It was felt by both groups that this would be more beneficial; a wider range of students could be reached, and the pressure on the SCM to financially support the chaplains would be eased. Tim McClure observed the effect that this same decision had on the movement in Britain. His words equally apply to New Zealand. He stated: 'To all intents and purposes, the new chaplaincies were providing what the SCM had traditionally offered to students and this led to a crisis of identity and purpose within the SCM'.<sup>14</sup> Chaplains also had a commitment to other groups, including the theologically conservative Evangelical Union, and could not put all their resources and time into the SCM.

<sup>9</sup>Roy Clements, 'The New Zealand Student Christian Movement in the Mid to Late 1960s', notes for the WSCF centennial, 1994, p.2. Copy in my possession.

<sup>10</sup>Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, p.168.

<sup>11</sup>Clements, 'The New Zealand Student Christian Movement in the Mid to Late 1960s', p.2.

<sup>12</sup>Clements, 'Report of the General Secretary', NZSCM Annual Report, 1967, p.1. In possession of John and Rita England.

<sup>13</sup>Patrick Jackson, 'My Time in SCM', May 1995, p.2. In my possession.

<sup>14</sup>Tim McClure, 'From Rubble to Rock', *Movement*, no.1, Spring 1989, p.17.

Adding to this erosion of identity was the fact that students were faced with a wider range of clubs as the universities rapidly expanded; the International club, Fabian club, and communist clubs all catered to specific audiences and provided forums for intellectual discussion. The decline in church youth work at around the same time contributed to the depletion of the pool of potential SCM members.

With the radical changes in the SCM in the 1960s, many of the churches withdrew their financial support. This impacted on the already declining finances of the movement. With student numbers dropping the SCM could not rely on member's donations and throughout the 1960s reports on the dire finances of the movement were frequent. In 1966 Frank Handy, the movement's treasurer was convinced that unless some massive transformation of the movement occurred, it could not afford to continue existing.<sup>15</sup>

Finances were so depleted that by the middle of the decade the schools division could no longer afford to continue running its magazine. The decision to appoint two new schools staff members at the end of 1966 accentuated these problems, rather than alleviating them, as it further eroded the movement's financial resources. By the early 1970s the school's division had largely disintegrated, a sad occurrence for its leaders, and a startling one, considering that there had been 43 schools with functioning branches at the beginning of 1966.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the problems, while related to plummeting finances, were also the product of a rejection of the traditions and institutions of previous generations. From the middle of the 1960s inherited structures, such as convention, district councils, and auxiliaries were no longer effective and it was felt by the leadership that they needed revision.<sup>17</sup> The view taken by John L'Estrange, general secretary at the end of the 1970s, reflected that of his counterparts in the 1960s. He stated that 'structure is subordinate to values and their communication'.<sup>18</sup> However as the movement discovered in the early 1970s, the communication of values was difficult to carry out without a fixed structure. Even in this period communication was waning, most apparent at an international level with the New Zealand movement operating largely in isolation from the WSCF. In the following decades, however, it did reaffirm its links with the federation, in particular the Asia Pacific region, which came to have a great influence on the movement in the 1990s. Communication at a local and national level was compromised instead.

### **'Politicisation': The mid-1960s to the mid-1970s**

The decision of the leaders of the SCM in the late 1960s to commit the movement to political action (reversing the decision made in 1936) was an attempt both to maintain relevance to a society which faced political and social upheaval, and to remedy the sense of 'rootlessness' prevalent in the movement.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup>See Annual Reports

<sup>16</sup>Report of NZSCM General Committee to Convention, January 1966, New Zealand Student Christian Movement (NZSCM) Papers, MS Papers 1617:94, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.

<sup>17</sup>Report of NZSCM General Committee to Convention, January 1968. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>18</sup>Minutes of the NZSCM General Committee, August 1979. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>19</sup>Don Borrie used this term to describe the movement in 1972. See Borrie, 'Report of the General Secretary', Reports to the NZSCM General Committee, August 1972, p.1, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:130, ATL.

The process of 'politicisation', defined officially by the SCM as the development of 'a critical awareness of society and a commitment to work for its betterment', began in the second half of the 1960s.<sup>20</sup> The establishment of a small task force in 1966, 'The Political Commission', signalled the commitment of the movement to the study of social and political affairs in their own right. The commission was implemented to 'promote responsible political consciousness within the SCM', and carried out research on national and international political concerns so that the SCM could make informed decisions about future action.<sup>21</sup> While it was modest in its beginnings, by 1969 the Political Commission had examined and provided information on a number of issues: the poverty engendered by the war in Biafra and the need for aid; the Vietnamese war; conscientious objection; and sporting contacts with South Africa.<sup>22</sup> It contributed to a rising awareness in the movement about social and political matters.

During the student riots and protests in the Western world in the late 1960s, social and political causes captured the full attention of the movement. In a report by the WSCF working group, which investigated the role of Christians in politics, it was stated 'that the demands of the Christian faith imply political engagement and...active opposition to oppression and injustice.'<sup>23</sup> Support of existing secular groups was its primary aim, rather than the transformation of the movement into a political group. It was expected to engage in political action only as a stopgap (for example, if no other group existed for a particular cause).<sup>24</sup>

The definition of Christianity in political terms illustrated the extent of the new political focus as well as a redefinition of traditional Christian concepts. 'Ecumenism' was no longer used to refer solely to the unity or co-operation of the churches; it was reapplied to embrace social and political groups.<sup>25</sup> The 'church' was also redefined; the term applied to those groups actively implementing justice in the community.<sup>26</sup> These 'politicised' definitions gave further justification for the SCM's involvement with a variety of socially and politically active groups, including HART, CORSO, the Organisation to Halt Military Service (OHMS), university associations, and Catholic groups. The SCM was represented on the committees of many of these, and also helped form new groups when the a need was perceived, such as the New Zealand Race Relations Council.<sup>27</sup> Letters to parliament, bills, and marches were among the methods employed by the leadership. A revised constitution at the end of the decade emphasised the needs to be 'alert to the needs of the world'.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the most telling illustration of this new alertness was the increased concern by the SCM about Maori/Pakeha relations in New Zealand. The Springbok

<sup>20</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1970, p.9. In possession of John and Rita England.

<sup>21</sup>Minutes of NZSCM General Committee, Lower Hutt, August 1966, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617.105, ATL.

<sup>22</sup>'Hoffnung: Some News About the NZSCM', July 1969, p.4, Rev Russell Thew Papers, 90-152.3, HL.

<sup>23</sup>Anon, 'Politics and the WSCF: A Report from the Working Group on Student Political Action to the 1968 General Assembly', Geneva, 1968, p.1. Copy in my possession.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1969, p.9. In possession of John and Rita England.

<sup>26</sup>Anon, 'The Overseas Mission Work of the New Zealand Methodist and Presbyterian Churches', 1975, p.12. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>27</sup>Touch, February 1975, p.9.

<sup>28</sup>NZSCM Constitution, 1969. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.



Rugby Tours were particularly effective in highlighting race-relations problems in New Zealand as well as South Africa and a growing awareness of racial inequality was becoming evident in New Zealand society generally, influenced by overseas challenges. By the early 1970s women, blacks and gays were vocalising their outrage at the way that their oppression was maintained by the acceptance of structures that enforced the nature of middle-class white male 'normality'. The SCM, among others became conscious about its part in the maintenance of these inequalities, and was concerned to bring about change with regard to Maori.

Thus the movement, while largely overlooking racial problems between Maori and Pakeha in the first 60 years of its existence, made the study of racism a priority in the early 1970s. Practical attacks on racism came in a variety of forms: protests, letters to the government, and local bids to get Maori language incorporated into the education system. At Waikato students fought to get a Maori research centre built.<sup>29</sup> Canterbury students from the SCM, Fabian and international clubs took steps to attain a Maori language unit on campus.<sup>30</sup> In Auckland SCM members worked with other groups to bring Maori language into the school syllabus.<sup>31</sup> A petition was signed by 34 000 people showing their support for this project.<sup>32</sup> Articles in *Touch* were increasingly dedicated to Maori land issues. Efforts to learn about Maori culture and language were encouraged by Borrie and Nga Tamatoa, a Maori group based in Auckland who worked with the SCM in this particular area.<sup>33</sup>

This broadening social and political focus was reflected in the theological magazines of the movement. *Charisma*, an independent student publication produced from 1965, was dedicated solely to the discussion of theology.<sup>34</sup> It became an official publication of the SCM in September 1966 and altered its focus to social issues; Vietnam, self-tax and apartheid were all topics addressed in the late 1960s. The last issues, produced in the middle of the 1970s, were dedicated to topics relating to development, and were produced in conjunction with SPAN (South Pacific Action Network) and RAVPOC (Release All Vietnamese Prisoners Of Conscience). The editor of *Ark*, the successor of *Charisma*, commented wryly about the sparse theological content of these 'theology' magazines: 'it appears that we New Zealanders do not wear theological type thinking caps very often.'<sup>35</sup> While the movement emphasised the importance of an active faith, it appeared to be overlooking its biblical basis and its commitment to an intellectual faith. Bible study and theology were rapidly slipping down its list of priorities.

### The Impact of Leadership in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s.

The 1960s was a time of confusion for the SCM with the number of students involved in its activities rapidly dropping. By the end of the decade the four main branches were comprised of 15-20 members each. The marginalisation of even a few

<sup>29</sup>NZSCM Annual Report 1972-3, p.2.

<sup>30</sup>*Hoffnung*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>31</sup>*Touch*, April 1970, p.6.

<sup>32</sup>*Te Reo Maori to All Peoples*, 1972, n.p., NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:387, ATL.

<sup>33</sup>Anon [Don Borrie?], 'Power, Justice Community', Press Statement, Dunedin, 1971, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:90, ATL.

<sup>34</sup>From 1932-4 a number of members including Jack Bates published the *New Zealand Journal of Theology*. However, it was never an official publication of the movement.

<sup>35</sup>'Editorial', *Ark*, no.5, October 1976, p.2.

members could jeopardise the existence of the whole movement. Thus the decisions made by radical leadership had potentially greater consequences in the late 1960s and early 1970s than in the earlier period.

### I. Roy Clements

Roy Clements was the first of the general secretaries who led the movement in its 'politically active' phase. However in the initial years of his term in office he also exhibited a strong interest in the meaning of ecumenism in the secular world. This perhaps explains his enthusiasm for the purchase of Old Stone House, in Christchurch, as an ecumenical centre in 1966 and, later, his interest in working with Catholic groups.

Old Stone House was used by SCM branches on a regular basis, more so in the 1950s and 1960s with the movement's emphasis on ecumenism. In 1966 it was gifted to the SCM by its owner, J. Cracroft Wilson. Clements, who encouraged the co-operation of the SCM with social and political groups in the wider community, was enthusiastic about the project. After its purchase, members of the Canterbury university branch of the SCM began the task of its renovation, halted by its gutting in an accidental fire in 1970. The movement's finances were so depleted that the movement could not afford to start rebuilding or renovating the building again; it was decided that the house should be handed over to the council to be reconstructed for use as a community centre. Under the new arrangement the SCM could still continue to hold its meetings there.<sup>36</sup>

Clements was also partly responsible for increased co-operation with the Catholic groups in the universities, demonstrated in the joint conferences held in 1967 and 1969. (The two groups also occasionally combined for activities in the branches.) This was in part due to an increasing acceptance of Catholicism after the Second Vatican Council of Rome (1962-5) as well as the commitment of Clements to wider ecumenism. The NCC made efforts from the middle of the 1960s to work with the Catholic church, resulting in the establishment of the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand (CCANZ) in 1988, a body which included Catholics.

The level of success of these conferences was debatable. Clements felt that the second one was a failure. This was not because of a division between Catholics and Protestant, but between those who wanted to remain church focused, and those who viewed political and social concern as of greatest importance.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, despite the tension, it was at this particular conference that the one per cent aid scheme (voluntary self-taxing for the victims of the war in Biafra) was conceived.

The commitment of the movement to 'politicisation' during Clements' leadership necessitated a balance between theology/study and action, but in reality this eluded the SCM. In the second half of the 1960s Clements stated:

What are the New Zealand definitions of power and powerlessness, justice and injustice, freedom and oppression, equality and racism, development and underdevelopment, community and alienation? For the moment the cries of anguish from dying and tortured Vietnamese, malnourished ill educated Pacific Islanders,

<sup>36</sup>For an indepth history of Old Stone House, and SCM's involvement in its renovations, see B.K. and N.F. Roberts, *Old Stone House 1870-1990, and the Cracroft Community Centre, 1972-1990*, Christchurch, 1990.

<sup>37</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1960, p.4. In possession of John and Rita England.

landless Maoris and frustrated protectors provides SCM with sufficient evidence and impetus to continue.<sup>38</sup>

The movement was largely motivated by the visible injustices that prevailed; a theological justification for action was absent.

## II. Don Borrie

Don Borrie, general secretary from 1970-74, was strongly influenced by the ideas behind liberation theology, which were being explored by the WSCF. At the beginning of the 1970s the federation committed itself to the study and practice of liberation theology, adopting the methodology of 'praxis': action-reflection. In 1970 at an international consultation to examine theology in the WSCF, it was impressed that 'non academic theology' needed to be developed. It defined this as 'an attempt to place...Christian thinking in the context of present social struggles, to relate it to movements of liberation in various parts of the world, and to rediscover a deeper meaning of the Christian Message.'<sup>39</sup> Liberation theology was part of a much broader desire for emancipation reflected in the late 1960s in the student revolution. The rhetoric of liberation became woven into the aims and the language of the WSCF at the beginning of the 1970s.<sup>40</sup> In 1973 it committed itself at the quadrennial assembly in Ethiopia to the study of liberation theology for the following four years.<sup>41</sup>

Borrie had previously questioned the culture of Christianity and the way European Christianity had empowered the privileged:

The global challenge to the primacy and efficacy of the white western culture, the effects of urbanisation and secularisation within these technological systems has brought into radical questioning the visibility of the western church and her theology. Is Christianity just another face of the white man's imperialism; is the Faith's contemporary institution the last vestige of outworn Europe; is the Church's theology merely a prop for the dying generation who cannot face the harsh reality that man is alone - master of his environment and finite destiny?<sup>42</sup>

A representative at the 1973 Ethiopia conference, Borrie recognised that liberation theology combined action and reflection. It also provided answers to the broader questions that were being asked by Clements and some minority groups about the maintenance of inequality in society. However, Borrie committed himself to fighting oppression and injustice actively. Letters, protests and education were his methods; theology remained a secondary concern.

Certain about his task in the world - to help establish the kingdom of God on earth - Borrie "pioneered" a style of personal involvement with other groups identified

<sup>38</sup>Roy Clements, 'Report of the General Secretary', Reports to the General Committee, August 1970, p.5, Thew Papers, 90-152:3, HL.

<sup>39</sup>Emidio Campi 'Notes for a Theological Balance Sheet of the 1966/1980 Student Generation: an Address to WSCF-CCA Consultation on Ecumenical Task of Asian Student Christian Movement', *Touch*, December 1982, p.4.

<sup>40</sup>For example see 'Liberation: A Christian Commitment', WSCF article, 1971, p.1. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>41</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1972-3, p.3. In possession of John and Rita England.

<sup>42</sup>Borrie, 'General Secretary's Report', NZSCM Annual Report, 1972-3, p.1. In possession of John and Rita England.



as being among the oppressed or working for social change'.<sup>43</sup> However his goals did not always match the expectations of those in the movement. His interests led to the neglect of some of the duties required to maintain coherency and group identity within the SCM. Borrie was heavily involved in a number of race and anti apartheid groups and was inclined to follow his interests around the world. In 1973 he attended two PCR (Programme to Combat Racism) meetings in Bangkok and Zurich in the place of Bishop Paul Reeves.<sup>44</sup> He also encouraged other prominent figures to travel internationally. Bob Scott, the chairman, travelled to South Africa in 1972, and encouraged the movement to consider apartheid and its implications.<sup>45</sup>

Borrie's implementation of new groups further complicated questions about the distinctive nature of SCM. One of these was the Frontier Group (abolished in 1975 after Borrie had left), a network of liberal churchmen with political and social interests.<sup>46</sup> The sheer amount of material produced for this group suggests that it was high on Borrie's priority list. The Organisation to Halt Military Service (OHMS), another group instigated with the input of some SCM members (such as Geoff Woolford) during Borrie's term in office, only lasted nine months. While SCM leadership claimed that it had made a big impact on society, it also had consequences for the SCM; prominent figures tended to refocus their energy into causes or projects such as this, sometimes to the detriment of the movement.<sup>47</sup>

In June 1971, the 'Movement Development Conference' was held to discuss the difficulties facing the SCM, and how they could be solved.<sup>48</sup> Many members complained that the movement, in its commitment to political and social action, had lost sight of the importance of reflection, study and theology. Donna Watson, the administration secretary of the SCM, outlined the feelings of members of the Otago branch: 'Otago is not to be categorised as anti-Borrie or anti-political interest and action, it is simply asking for a *balance* of concern. At the moment, some branches are potentially mobilisable political forces, but they seem to be losing their atmosphere of caring community'.<sup>49</sup> These criticisms were not new; the previous year a study camp had been held to 'rectify the...small failing' of a lack of balance in the movement's priorities.<sup>50</sup> However, the leadership's attitudes towards Bible study were moulded by the perception that Christianity necessitated an active fight for social justice. Graeme Jones, after attending the camp, stated that the biblical study programme was acceptable 'if you like that sort of thing', but added with some relief: '[f]or those who know the Bible off by heart the saving grace was a couple of visits by some of the Rev Don Borrie's hottest Maori contacts'.<sup>51</sup>

Personal conflict, much of which was caused over unclear definitions of the role of the general secretary, led to unresolved tensions in national office.<sup>52</sup> A lack of

<sup>43</sup>Ross Hampton, 'Editorial', *Touch*, May 1975, p.5.

<sup>44</sup>*Touch*, August 1973, p.2.

<sup>45</sup>*Touch*, 1972.

<sup>46</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1970, p.2. In possession of John and Rita England.

<sup>47</sup>*Touch*, March 1973, p.3.

<sup>48</sup>See John Read, 'Report on the Movement Development Conference', *Touch*, June 1971, p.3.

<sup>49</sup>Watson to Nairn, 24 March 1971. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>50</sup>Graeme Jones, 'Who are the Storm Troopers?', Canterbury SCM Newsletter, no.1, 1970, p.4. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>Bob Scott, the chairman was aware of the problems of communication in national office and noted this in a letter to Mitzi Nairn. See Scott to Nairn, 4 June 1971. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

a common vision at a national level, the focal point and guidance centre of the movement, was detrimental to the branches. Those branches with enough members to formulate a united front, were heavily critical of Borrie's tendency to concentrate on his own agenda rather than that of the SCM.<sup>53</sup> While Borrie claimed to represent the movement as its general secretary, the branches felt that there was a lack of communication between national office and the branches. Without the personal guidance of Borrie, the branches did not have a study programme and were unsure of the direction or vision of the movement. Like the British movement in the 1970s, the movement had become a place for radical politics, and was rapidly losing its student base. By 1976 the movement averaged 5-15 students in each branch.<sup>54</sup>

### III. Howard Corry

In 1977 Howard Corry (general secretary at the time) stated: 'SCM will survive and find its purpose only as we confess that we can be nothing else but Christian.'<sup>55</sup> Corry defined Christianity in terms of theology and personal spirituality, emphasising the need to 'think theologically about...[the movement's] social/political commitments'.<sup>56</sup> The redefinition of Christianity in terms of political action in the late 1960s and early 1970s essentially undermined a reflective faith; the Christian aspect of the SCM was defined as the application of members 'in research, discussion and action to highlighting issues and concerns'.<sup>57</sup> Member's experience of the movement and its Christian commitment was largely confined to political action. However, in Corry's period of leadership members were discovering, like the Victoria branch in 1975, that 'unless we have a solid theological base to cohere around, the group can become too issue orientated and lose its identity'.<sup>58</sup> While Corry believed in the importance of social justice, and continued to focus on nuclear disarmament, justice for developing nations, and racism, he also realised that without a spiritual and theological base, the movement would not survive as a Christian group.

From 1975 Corry attempted to re-establish bible study and sought to implement liberation theology. But while the rhetoric of 'liberation' dominated the aims and language of the reports from the mid 1970s, the practice of theologising was limited to a few leaders.<sup>59</sup> With few specific references to the biblical application of liberation, it appears that the adoption of the jargon was as much a sign of the (secular) times, as a move towards a new theology. The women's movement, for example, used the concepts and terms associated with liberation. The structural transformation and communication difficulties of the movement made attempts to reinforce its study largely unsuccessful. At a branch level there was a noticeable silence, characteristic of the student voice in the SCM throughout this period.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Donna Watson to Nairn, 31 March 1971. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>54</sup> NZSCM Annual Report, 1976-7, p.8. In possession of John and Rita England.

<sup>55</sup> Howard Corry, 'Editorial', *Touch*, March 1977, p.1.

<sup>56</sup> Corry to Nairn, 8 July 1976. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>57</sup> *Touch*, December 1973, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> *Touch*, May 1975, p.5.

<sup>59</sup> The liberation theology that developed in the early 1970s in Latin America aimed to 'liberate' the gospel as a message of emancipation to the poverty-stricken and marginalised, rather than being a tool of power in the hands of the clergy. See Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, New York, 1988, pp.67-78.

<sup>60</sup> The Canterbury branch of the movement carried out a study in 1975: 'Who is Oppressed in Our Society and How.' It is difficult to ascertain what else was being studied (if anything) because of the



### A Widening Vision: The City Worker Scheme in the 1970s.

In the early 1970s in Auckland, a roll consisting of 300 people with past involvement in the SCM provided a resource pool which the leadership of the branch in Auckland felt that it should utilise, particularly as the SCM as a university group was rapidly becoming redundant. Mitzi Nairn, a leading figure in the SCM, argued that while the university branches of the SCM were vital because they helped produce future administrators, scientists, and politicians and other leaders, social concern could not be confined to the universities; the SCM had a lot to offer people of all ages in New Zealand society.<sup>61</sup>

Established in Dunedin in 1974 and Auckland in 1975, the City Worker Scheme aimed to bring together past members and supporters of the SCM.<sup>62</sup> This concept was a product of the increasing breakdown of the SCM and its communication networks, and also developed out of a perceived need for decentralisation of the movement.<sup>63</sup> It contributed to a further dispersal through regionalisation and a focus on graduates as well as (and sometimes to the detriment of) students. It was linked with the district councils, which had fluctuated and all but collapsed in the late 1960s. Similar 'senior friends' groups operated in Hamilton, Christchurch and Dunedin, but these were not particularly stable and lacked continuity.<sup>64</sup> While Wellington had a functioning group, Auckland was the longest lasting and most consistent due to the leadership of Nairn. It produced vast amounts of material on pertinent political and social questions, from apartheid to the conflict in South Korea. It also ran a series of groups, including one dedicated to the study of Christian feminism, and another which examined development and missions. The regional group produced material for a number of purposes, including dissemination amongst the branches of the SCM.

Like Borrie, Nairn had a specific social and political agenda. She was involved with CORSO, ACORD (Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination), the NCC Church and Society Commission, New Perspectives on Race, the NCC Programme to Combat Racism, and a number of other action and social justice groups. Anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-apartheid were the highest priorities. Nairn acknowledged that her race activities were not directly related to the SCM, but envisaged cross-over and networking between the groups.<sup>65</sup> This aspect gained criticism when the regional group was beginning to struggle in 1980. Some members observed that the overlap of these groups made a firm commitment to SCM difficult to maintain.<sup>66</sup>

With the establishment of the regional group, the SCM covered an increasingly diverse range of views. While reaching into the wider community, the leaders of this group in Auckland continued to support the university branch, providing

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fluid informal nature of the branches at this time. See *Touch*, September 1975, p.4.

<sup>61</sup>Mitzi Nairn, 'Thoughtful Report in Response to Keith's Letter of March 31', April 1981, p.3. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>62</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1975-6, p.7. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>63</sup>*Touch*, May 1974, p.1

<sup>64</sup>Minutes of the NZSCM General Committee, Christchurch, 19-22 August 1976. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>65</sup>'Report from Auckland District Council SCM', August 1974, n.p. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>66</sup>Nairn, 'Thoughtful Report in Response to Keith's Letter of March 31', p.2.



encouragement and resources, and helping members run the annual bookstall. However this was often all they had in common. The student branches questioned the strong political emphasis of the graduate group, most of whom had been influenced by the social/political focus of Clements and Borrie. Conferences reflected the concerns of the graduate groups (who organised them in the late 1970s) with increasingly low student attendance. In the words of one student member, the conferences in the 1970s had become overrun with 'oldies'.<sup>67</sup> Alun Richards, the member arrested in 1936 for his refusal to attend Compulsory Military training, was not alone when he stated after a conference in the early 1970s that it lacked 'S', 'C', and 'M'.<sup>68</sup> A decade later a group at Victoria observed the irony of the movement being called 'Student' and 'Christian' when it was frequently catering for 'aging [sic] disillusioned ex Christian devotees and other religious societies on campus'.<sup>69</sup>

Communication between the student branches, graduate branches, and national office was inadequate. In 1976 Nairn received a letter regarding a cheque sent to her in response to the movement's annual appeal. The sender, Mr. E.W. Tetley, had received no receipt. However some weeks later a letter had arrived from the national office in Wellington, suggesting that he had overlooked his yearly donation. Tetley commented in a somewhat annoyed fashion: 'There does not appear to be any liaison between [the Auckland City SCM] and NZSCM. For some time now I have doubted my sympathy with the efforts and thinking of SCM and feel that this would be a suitable time to say I no longer wish to be a member.'<sup>70</sup> In her reply Nairn noted that the liaison between local and NZSCM had broken down in the late 1960s and that 'administration seems to be the blind spot' of the SCM.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps it would be more accurate to suggest that communication had become the 'blind spot'. The publication of the magazine *Touch* did little to remedy the problem in the 1970s, even though more effective communication was its aim.

### **The SCM as a Bicultural Network: The 1980s.**

By the time John L'Estrange took over as general secretary in 1978 the structure and organisation of the SCM was minimal. There was no national office, no general secretary, and practically no communication between what was left of the branches. In the words of the man appointed as convenor of the national committee, it was in 'its doldrums'.<sup>72</sup> The branches were dissipated, with little sense of a national body. The general committee, as J. Hollingworth suggested, was farcical in its claims to be representative of the movement.<sup>73</sup> Victoria and Canterbury showed a disinterest in those things that the movement claimed to represent: social action and liberation theology. The Canterbury was not particularly political, while the leader at Victoria

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<sup>67</sup> Minutes of the NZSCM General Committee, Lower Hutt, 17-21 August, 1977. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>68</sup> *Touch*, May 1974, p.2.

<sup>69</sup> *Touch*, February 1984, p.4.

<sup>70</sup> E.W. Tetley to Nairn, 6 December 1976. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>71</sup> Nairn to Tetley, 11 December 1976. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>72</sup> J.G. Gillespie, 'National Office Committee Report', Reports to the NZSCM General Committee, August 1981, p.1. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>73</sup> J. Hollingworth, 'NZSCM- Proposal re Future of Movement', 1 June 1984, p.1, Ramsey House (RH), Victoria University of Wellington.

stated that the opinions of the 10-12 members were varied, their common point of agreement being a dissatisfaction with liberation theology.<sup>74</sup>

In the 1970s the graduate groups had relied largely on the enthusiasm of a few, and collapsed at the end of the decade without their impetus. In 1978 Nairn went overseas to attend a conference, then toured New Zealand to share her experiences. The Auckland group was at its weakest in this year, struggling to maintain cohesion and continue its activities. In 1980 Nairn had heavy commitments and the movement was unable to continue to give her financial support. Her time and energies were poured out elsewhere and, with the SCM national office all but defunct, the network in Auckland collapsed.

When Don Borrie came back as chairman in 1984, the SCM was an incoherent body which had all but collapsed entirely. A small group based in Wellington claimed to represent the movement, and made decisions on behalf of the SCM, which contained only 30 or 40 members throughout the branches.<sup>75</sup>

In the middle of the 1980s discussions began to increase within the core group on the SCM's commitment to breaking down oppression in New Zealand. It was argued by some members that it was not enough to work with Maori groups, or to strive for the recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi as a document guaranteeing tino rangatiratanga. They also had to consider the way they had oppressed Maori and help to remedy this. Significant input came from the Ecumenical Youth Movement (EYM), a Pakeha youth network established in 1983 (associated with the NCC), which fought for bi-culturalism in Aotearoa.<sup>76</sup> The EYM took its members from outside the university and held joint conferences with the SCM as well as sharing its newsletter, *Weaver*. It encouraged the SCM to actively use its resources for Maori needs.<sup>77</sup>

At the 1985 annual general meeting Te Kaweroa Kohu from Waikato, a delegate representing the SCM at the Human Resource Development Conference (a training conference for ecumenical groups run by the WSCF Asia Pacific Office) influenced the bi-cultural emphasis of the SCM. She stressed the importance of the movement coming out of its 'white university club shell' and networking with Maori groups. She also challenged the belief that Pakeha delegates were appropriate to represent Aotearoa at international conferences. Kohu argued that the SCM was responsible for opening up its resources to Maori. Her suggestions resulted in the instigation of a system which required a consensus between Maori and Pakeha networks before the selection of delegates to overseas conferences.<sup>78</sup> It was reported by the EYM that this was an example of 'changes that were about [P]akehas seeking to discard previous claims to power in favour of a better system of power-sharing and consultation with Maori people.'<sup>79</sup>

<sup>74</sup>Minutes of the NZSCM National Executive Meeting, Wellington, 25 April 1981. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>75</sup>From 1981 membership was at this level, until 1988 when it was practically non-existent. See Minutes of the NZSCM National Executive, Wellington, 25 April 1981, RH.

<sup>76</sup>'Report of the Ecumenical Youth Movement to the NZSCM AGM', August 1986, p.1. In possession of Mitzi Nairn.

<sup>77</sup>'Report of the Ecumenical Youth Movement to the NCC Annual General Meeting', 1987, n.p., RH.

<sup>78</sup>'The Ecumenical Youth Movement Report on the NZSCM General Committee, 1985', *Touch*, December 1985, p.8.

<sup>79</sup>'The Ecumenical Youth Movement Report on the NZSCM General Committee, 1985', p.8.

The discussions relating to the Nairn Street house in Wellington illustrated this desire to implement a system that would benefit and recognise the needs of both Maori and Pakeha. In 1954 the Nairn Street house was purchased from the Baptist Union for the use of the general secretary.<sup>80</sup> When there was no general secretary, it was used to provide accommodation for students associated with the movement. The house was vacated in 1986 (after considerable problems with a tenant who refused to pay rent), and the new tenants were a group of Maori, who used it as a base for their work with other Maori women. The downstairs flat was being let as office space for Te Kakano o te Whanau, a Maori Women's sexual abuse and domestic violence support network.

In 1987 the Student Christian Movement (Aotearoa) was officially established. The constitution of the SCM(A) provided for a bicultural, ecumenical network of student groups and other young people committed to the Treaty of Waitangi. It claimed to recognise Maori as tangata whenua. It also aimed to fight for justice, particularly with regards to gender and ethnicity. It was committed to implementing the principles it viewed as enforcing the Treaty, one of these being the even distribution of power between Maori and Pakeha.<sup>81</sup> This led to discussions over the future of the house, as the movement considered the importance of resource sharing.

It was this idea that led the group in Wellington to agree that the house should go to the Maori women's caucus of the SCM, as tangata whenua. The Maori women's caucus asked that the title be transferred to a Maori organisation, Awhina Wahine, so that there would be full Maori control of the property. Conflict arose between the group who were the current tenants and the organisation nominated to receive the house. This eventually led to a resolution by the SCM that the house be given to the tangata whenua in Wellington. This was also problematic; as some leading Maori figures and senior friends of the movement had pointed out, the land was not disputed property, and its gifting would not necessarily strengthen Maori/Pakeha relations. However, the decision remained, causing ongoing debate and discussion in the following years. It was finally reversed in December of 1995. This turn around was justified on the grounds that the sale of the house would not further the development of indigenous theology or enhance the building of Maori/Pakeha relations, and would ultimately destroy the movement being its main source of income.<sup>82</sup>

This incident illustrated the complete transformation of the movement. It was more concerned about its role as a bi-cultural network than with theological justification for its actions, or its role as a Christian group committed to education and study. Discussions over the Nairn Street house dominated the minutes of the SCM right through the late 1980s and 1990s. The newsletter announcing the 1995 decision stated: 'This SGM is a very significant event in the life of the [m]ovement. It marks a turning point in our history. No longer when two or three of us are gathered need we groan when Nairn st [sic] is mentioned.'<sup>83</sup> While the movement felt justified in its concentration on the house because of its stated ideal of 'resource sharing', its focus was narrow, its membership was nearly non-existent, and its function as a Christian group was ambiguous. However the solution of the incident also signified a change in the priorities of those in the SCM(A) in the 1990s: an emphasis on the development of

<sup>80</sup>NZSCM Annual Report, 1954-5, NZSCM Papers, MS Papers 1617:465, ATL.

<sup>81</sup>See Appendix 2.

<sup>82</sup>Minutes of the Nairn Street Consultation Special General Meeting, Wellington, December 1995. Copy in my possession.

<sup>83</sup>'SCM Update', newsletter, no.7, December 1995, p.1. In my possession.



theology as the basis for action, and a concern with personal spirituality, a trend becoming apparent in the churches generally.

### The SCM(A): 1987-1996

The Student Christian Movement Aotearoa officially came into being in 1987. The altered structure worked into the constitution aimed to accommodate the movement's new focus and broad belief base. Operating officially as a network rather than a self contained group, it encouraged groups of a variety of social, political and religious beliefs to affiliate. A lack of hierarchy sprung partly from the ideal of equality. Later a national co-ordinating group and a national working-group replaced the executive and general committees of previous generations.

However from 1988 the movement existed only on paper as the decision was made by the remaining members to cease the operation of the movement altogether. While there were some enthusiastic key figures in the movement, such as Barry Taylor and David Hanna, arrested in 1987 for their part in Waitangi Day protests at Parliament,<sup>84</sup> the branches were basically defunct. The Otago university branch was exceptional, struggling on and demonstrating its tenacity by continuing to run the second hand book shop at the beginning of each university year.

In 1990 a group at Canterbury decided to try and resuscitate the movement, building links with interested pupils or groups at the other universities. By 1992 an Auckland branch existed, Canterbury had 30 at one event, and Victoria and Otago averaged 10 members each.<sup>85</sup> The national office was relocated in Dunedin where an enthusiastic group took responsibility for the administration of the movement, a fitting decision for a movement struggling to find continuity and stability.

The SCM(A) today emphasises the need for 'the development of a relevant theology and Christian lifestyle for Aotearoa.'<sup>86</sup> Still comprised of only a few members in each branch, it claims to be developing a New Zealand theology as a basis for its involvement in society. The implementation of caucuses for men and women, Maori and Pakeha, aim to grant equal opportunities to anyone of any sexual orientation, gender or ethnicity.<sup>87</sup>

Forums with visiting speakers, and retreats once or twice a year, illustrate a backlash against previous generations in its return to an emphasis on study. Those currently administering the movement have clearly stated their aims to focus on students within the university. The SCM(A)'s magazine, heavily weighted towards the study of theology applicable to Aotearoa, is called *Akonga*, a name which loosely translates as 'student' or 'disciple'. The name signifies a desire to return to a firm theological base, echoing the concern with solid study in the period from the mid-1930s until the early 1960s, when *Student* was the magazine of the movement.

As the SCM looks to the future, after one hundred years of existence, it faces many challenges; perhaps the greatest is maintaining a balance between its dedication to Christianity and its commitment to constant adaptation in the face of social change. One prominent member, Julianne Morris, demonstrated an awareness of this challenge when she stated in a recent article that '[t]here needs to be a balance between faith

<sup>84</sup>Weaver, February 1987, p.2.

<sup>85</sup>See *SCM Aotearoa News*, June 1992, p.1.

<sup>86</sup>*Canterbury Student Christian Movement*, pamphlet, c.1990s, n.p., RH.

<sup>87</sup>*Otago Student Christian Movement*, pamphlet, c.1990s, n.p., RH.

exploration and political involvement.<sup>88</sup> With its links to the Asia Pacific movement, which emphasises 'praxis', and its commitment to developing a relevant theology, the movement stands firmly within the SCM tradition: like their SCM counterparts several generations before, members are committed to exploring the Christian faith. While there is an emphasis on the need for political and social action, there is also a growing realisation of the significance of the movement's function as a place for intellectual discussion and for the nurturing of spirituality in individuals.

While the movement is small, the hopes of its members are great. They stand as a reminder of the importance of having dreams; because of the vision of six men, who were brave enough to stand up for their beliefs, the lives of thousands of people throughout the world were moulded and changed. The SCM in New Zealand has been through many changes since its founding; its future remains in the hands of a few, and it is through the determination of this small group that the movement will live on.

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<sup>88</sup> *Crosslink*, vol. 9, July 1995.

## APPENDIX No. 1

### AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE NZSCM.

(Source: Open Windows, vol.5, no.6, September 1931, p.2.)

'The New Zealand Student Christian Movement is a fellowship of students who desire to understand the Christian faith and live the Christian life. The Movement seeks to present Jesus Christ as the supreme manifestation of God and of true manhood, the Saviour of the world, the source of power for the overthrow of evil, and the Lord of life in all its relations. It sets forth the Christian faith as challenging students to devote the whole of life to the service of the Kingdom of God by the application of Christian principles to the practice of their profession or business and to all problems of individual and social, national and international, life. The Movement challenges every student to recognise the urgent need of the whole world for Christ, without limit of race or nation and to consider his own responsibility in regard to the evangelisation of the world. To this end it calls students to explore Christ's teaching; to seek the guidance of His spirit; to prepare themselves by study, discipline and prayer for the tasks of the future; and to enter the fellowship of worship, thought and service which is the heritage of the Christian Church.'



## APPENDIX No.2

### THE AIMS OF THE SCM (AOTEAROA)

(Source: Student Christian Movement (Aotearoa) Constitution, 1 May 1993)

#### (2) AIMS

SCM (Aotearoa), which is affiliated to the World Student Christian Federation, is a movement which recognises the Maori people as tangata whenua of Aotearoa and accepts the Treaty of Waitangi (as recorded in the Appendix) as the basis of its constitution, and whose members are seeking to understand the Christian faith, and develop their own spirituality. Therefore it aims:

- (i) To work locally for peace and justice from an ecumenical perspective, with specific reference to working against racism and sexism;
- (ii) To recognise and support individuals and groups whose aims are consistent with those of SCM (Aotearoa), and foster the links between such individuals and groups and international movements for liberation;
- (iii) To contribute to the development of a relevant theology for Aotearoa

#### APPENDIX

1. The SCM (Aotearoa) accepts the Treaty of Waitangi as the base for its constitution. SCM (Aotearoa) will work in accordance with the Treaty as written below.

Victoria the Queen of England, in her kind (gracious) thoughtfulness to the Chiefs and Hapu of New Zealand, and her desire to preserve them their chieftainship and their land and that peace and quietness may be kept with them, because a great number of the people of her tribe have settled in this country and (more) will come, has thought it right to send a chief (an officer) as one who will make a statement to (negotiate with) the Maori people of New Zealand. Let the Maori chiefs accept the governship (kawanatanga) of the Queen over all parts of this country and the Islands. Now, the Queen desires to arrange the governship lest evil should come to the Maori people and the Europeans who are living here without law. Now, the Queen has been pleased to send me, William Hobson, a Captain in the Royal Navy to be Governor for all places of New Zealand which are now given up or which shall be given up to the Queen. And she says to the Chiefs of the Confederation of the Hapus of New Zealand and the other chiefs, these are the laws spoken of.

#### First

The Chiefs of the Confederation and all those chiefs who have not joined in that Confederation giving up to the Queen of England forever all the Governship (Kawanatanga) of their land.

#### Second

The Queen of England agrees and consents (to give) to the chiefs, the Hapu and all the people of New Zealand the chieftainship (of) their lands, their villages and all their

treasured cultural possessions by the Chiefs of the Confederation and all the other chiefs give to the Queen the purchasing of those pieces of land which will be agreed to by them and the purchaser who shall be appointed by the Queen for the purpose of buying them for her.

### Third

This is the arrangement or the consent of the Governship of the Queen. The Queen will protect all the Maori people of New Zealand and give them the same rights as those of the people of England.

2. SCM (Aotearoa) sees the following as principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and will there[fore] work to up-hold them:

- The Treaty of Waitangi is a charter of two peoples in one nation;
- The Treaty of Waitangi recognises Maori as Tangata Whenua and Pakeha as Manahiri;
- The Treaty is a joint partnership between Maori and Pakeha, of resources, institutions and decision making;
- The Treaty of Waitangi gives status to the Pakeha in this country on the condition that they honour the Treaty;
- The Treaty guarantees the Maori people rangatiratanga over their lands, homes and taonga;
- The Treaty of Waitangi is a living document with a wairua of its own.

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